

A. Suter.

An humble attempt to
defend the Bible
.. aspersions .. Paine

Sunderland
1796.

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Antiq
book 41.

AN
HUMBLE ATTEMPT
TO DEFEND
THE BIBLE
AGAINST
THE ASPERSIONS
OF
MR PAINE,
IN HIS SECOND PART OF
THE AGE OF REASON,
BY
A. SUTER.

*Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have to
speak on God's behalf.—ELIHU.*

SUNDERLAND:
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ERRATA.

I beg the indulgence of the reader to correct the following, and any other, mistakes.

page line

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 7 | 23 | for best read as well |
| 10 | 14 | --- approbrious ——— opprobrious |
| — | 29 | --- third ——— first |
| 12 | 7 | --- Deteronomy ——— Deuteronomy |
| 14 | 4 | --- evils now existing ——— other evils |
| 15 | 18 | --- irrevently ——— irreverently |
| 20 | 24 | --- gentlemen ——— gentleman |
| 36 | 25 | --- Defty ——— Deity |
| 54 | 30 | --- evidence ——— evidences |
| 56 | 31 | --- vegetation ——— vegetation |
| 58 | 17 | --- Testaments ——— Testament |
| 60 | 40 | --- irradicate ——— eradicate |
| 61 | 22 | --- Deliver ——— Deliverer |

HUMBLE ATTEMPT,

&c.



“IT has often been said,” says Mr Paine, p. 1. “that any thing may be proved from the bible,” and it appears he has fully entered into the belief of this doctrine, and gone a little further, I apprehend, than few, if any, before him him ever thought of going, even to the making it a monster to the devouring its own production——its own self!

Whatever contentions some commentators may have had about some particular parts of the bible, they have generally agreed, that the purest truths were to be found there. It is possible for men to differ in their judgments about some things, and yet fall into an union of sentiment in others; hence Mr P.’s former antagonists could “contend and wrangle” about their own opinions, but unite “in telling their readers that Thomas Paine understands not” the bible. Perhaps there was some truth in it. But he is become wiser since the first part of his *Age of Reason* was published, and it is in the second part that we are to discover it.

“Now instead of waiting time,” says this gentleman, p. 2, “men ought to know, and if they do not, it is civility to inform them, that the first thing to be understood is, whether there is sufficient authority for believing the bible,” &c. This is kind. But in answer

to this, it is to be observed that they *do know*, and, as far as is satisfactory to their own minds, are *fully persuaded* that it is "the word of God;" yet do they not decline investigation, conscious that truth appears the brightest and most agreeable, when the closest examined, and best known.

"There are," say you, same page, "matters in that book, said to be done by *the express command* of God that are shocking to humanity," &c. Here Mr P. seems not so civil, but arraigns the Almighty and passes sentence, pronouncing him guilty of the greatest cruelties, and ranking him among assassins of the bloodiest nature! However in answer to these, and all such heavy charges against God and the bible I only desire and think no reasonable dill can well refuse me, the following propositions by which I trust to make all the attributes of God harmonize in all the various apparently dreadful things that are affixed to him, or executed by his orders, in the bible, viz.

1. That there is a God, and that he is supreme over all, just, wise, and good. 2. That the earth is his workmanhip, and at his disposal. 3. That man and beast are his creatures, and he has an absolute right over them. 4. That man has an immortal spirit, capable of being miserable or happy here and hereafter. 5. That this is a disordered state, and that there is a better and a worse. 6. That in those states, here are degrees both of happiness and misery. From these principles, and the use Mr Paine makes and allows, as we shall soon see, of the bible, I intend, with the help of heaven, to meet his arguments against God, his word, and servants.

Mr Paine proceed, same page, "It is not the antiquity of a tale that is any evidence of its truth," &c. This we admit if other evidences are wanting; but that this is the case respecting the scriptures remains to be proved; and that the reverse is true, will be made I trust sufficiently to appear. It may be said of antiquity as of things in general, it has its uses and abuses. The bible does not plead for the errors or defects of antiquity, or written truths would never have taken place

of oral traditions ; nor would the New Testament ever supersede that of the Old. When antiquity is called in to support a bad cause, or to establish dangerous principles, or clothes with the rights of man, in a civil or religious sense, it is to be detested, and every man should protest against it. But the doctrines of the bible are of so equalizing a nature, and its maxims so full of benignity to all men, that equal violence must be done to force it to serve such purposes, as to the mind of a rational, unprejudiced person, not to believe it to be of God. The antiquity of the bible is justly made use of by us in this day as a proof of the goodness of God to men in remote ages of the world, and to shew, wherein it concerns us in similar things, how far an old tried friend is to be preferred to a suspected stranger. But let us see with what propriety Mr P. makes use of the antiquity of the bible to overturn it. "The origin of every nation," says he, same page, "is buried in fabulous tradition, and that of the Jews as much so as any other." I never knew this before respecting this people, I do not believe it. Who that has read history will credit this gentleman here ? On the contrary, the Jews as a nation are as well known, as to their origin, laws, government, and country ; yea more so than any nation upon earth. And what is more, we are indebted to them for the truest accounts of the rise and fall of the most distinguished empires ever existing. But Mr P. sets off here on wrong premises, and with mistaken notions of things. Was he treating of a people, the records of whose country were lost, or had never been written, what he says might appear to have some weight ; but as they now stand, and stand so fair on the annals of time, we cannot admit of his conclusions. For, 1. Those things Mr P. calls ancient, were written when *new, fresh* ; yea, while some were living whose names and conduct, both good and bad, were mentioned. If this people had not believed it to be the will of God, that an history of those things should be made and kept, would they have suffered the writers, so much to their disgrace, to have proceeded ; giving an account of their

abject state, their deliverance ; and fast following impiety and ingratitude ? What nation ever set off before or since, in publishing its own shame ; or historians, in declaring their own defects ? A proof, an indubitable proof to me, of the authenticity of bible history.— But further, if their posterity, and I hope Mr P. will admit there is such, had not believed the accounts to be really true, they would have found means to have destroyed the whole, or expunged the disagreeable and introduced something more to the credit of themselves and progenitors. But as a further proof. 2. Firm in the belief of the ancient books of Moses and their author, their records have been improved and enlarged after the same manner, where we have details of their customs, crimes, and misfortunes. Strange that from among themselves none ever rose to find out the cheat and discover the impostor. Nay, that even the most remarkable body of dissenters amongst them, the Sadducees, should give the fullest credit to the five books of Moses. 3. Many other writers have borne testimony of very ancient date to the reality of Moses and his writings. Still I admit the scriptures, owing to the distance of time, may appear in many respects doubtful. So, from various changes, does the history of past times among ourselves, appear almost incredible. To all histories we owe a degree of implicit faith, if we would receive the facts of past ages ; should that be denied, we may doubt every thing, and consider ourselves as the first of our own species that has been, and the last that will be. Who so capable of giving us an account of Britain nearly 2000 years ago, as Julius Cæsar ? The history of the Jews commenced with the nation, and was executed by one, who, under God, was the instrument of raising it to that dignity. The lapse of thousands of years cannot invalidate truth ; truth grows not old ; truth knows no decay. What then was true in Moses' day, must be true in ours as to the things of that æra. This is what Mr P. should have attended to, but has not, hence is he bewildered and bewilders others, and with all this host of the most satisfactory evidence that things done before

we existed can have, he openly declares them false. But what credit can such a man himself expect? Does he think that because he denies Moses that tribute, the present age will the more readily pay it him? It is to be lamented we suffer ourselves to be so easily deceived, and novel y is very engaging; but I trust, after all, we are not so soon rallied out of our senses, hectored out of our bibles, nor so easily bullied into a system no ways likely to make us wiser, happier, better men, or better citizens.

"Having premised these things," says Mr P. p. 5, "I proceed to examine the authenticity of the bible, and begin with what is called the five books of Moses, *Genesis*," &c. "My intention," adds he, "is to shew that those books are spurious, and that Moses is not the author, and that they were not written for several hundred years after the time of Moses. The evidence I shall produce in this is from the books themselves. I will confine myself to this evidence only." &c. Most proper, and what we wish; we desire nothing more, and shall pursue the same plan in humbly attempting to support them.

"First place," says Mr P. page 6. "there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of those books," &c. Let us see. What do you mean by "affirmative evidence?" Is not the affirming, or asserting a thing to be the work of any person, affirmative evidence? It certainly is. But will you say that those books are no where asserted or affirmed to be Moses'? Look at the beginning of each book, and then say if you can, "there is no affirmative evidence?" you may as well say, there is no sun in the firmament. Besides, affirmative evidence is one of the most futile, and the least to be depended upon in the world. How many affirmative falsehoods are there as to authors among us? How many affirmations have we in the *Age of Reason*, that the "bible is full of lies," &c. &c. The most valid and satisfactory evidences are contemporary, and succeeding persons of credit, some of whom we have hinted at,

and shall take more notice of them by and by; testifying of Moses and the books that go by his name.

The next objection is "the style and manner," p. 6. To cast some light upon this we shall consider the *place* in which Moses stood. He was a public functionary; called by Jehovah and entrusted with his pleasure and designs to a very high degree, and commissioned to make these known to the people. Consider this man then in this situation, dealing forth laws and rules, the most obnoxious to the unbridled passions of a licentious multitude, with the severest penalties annexed: and at the same time the public executor of God's will in those statutes, living among the people, daily exposed to their threats and murmurs, often insulted with the approbrious term of tyrant, &c. This being the case, who can wonder at, or find fault with, Moses for adopting the *third* person in style, and using every mean in his power to give the most solemn sanction to the orders of God, and to his own appointment, in frequently saying, "*The Lord said unto Moses?*" &c. &c. I appeal to the world if the "style and manner" speak not more, things being thus, for the books than any other could do. But in the next place I appeal to the bible. It would be almost endless to enumerate all the passages in the same style, from Isaiah to Malachi both included. But I appeal to the books themselves. Mr Paine says, page 6. "The whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, is in the third person, it is always *The Lord said unto Moses,*" &c. What, the "*whole, always?*" Is not the third person *some* times used? Is it not *several* times used, and that too in *one* chapter, in a solemn manner both to God and the people, at a very particular time when the credit of Moses both as a magistrate and prophet was at stake? Permit me, Sir, to recommend to your perusal the 16th chapter of Numbers, and pardon me if I add, you must either deny the clearest truths, or your own assertions; you and your friends must either believe the bible, or plain, direct, barefaced falsehoods. To prove the books genuine, and the works of Moses, I have further to add. 4. Moses was the most qualified for that

work of any man then living. 5. The titles of the books speak for him, and he is mentioned by name as a principle agent in the affairs they treat of, through Exodus and the three following books, in the first, second, and third person, as circumstances required, and is said to have written certain parts at particular times, Exod. xxiv. 4. Deut. xxxi. 22, 24. Joshua viii. 32. 6. He is quoted in the Old and New Testament as David and the other prophets are, Psalms cv. and cvi. Mark xii. 19. John v. 46, &c. &c.

To clear Moses from the charge of being a "coxcomb" from the solitary sentence, Numb. xii. 3. *Now the man Moses was very meek above all men*, &c. p. 6. 1. Moses, by the command of God, chose a successor, Numb. xxvii. 18. &c. *Joshua in whom is the Spirit*, &c. Now as Joshua had been long famous among the people, Moses might have employed him as his amanuensis, and he might, in defence of Moses, by God's authority, to justify his insulted servant at that remarkable time, for so it seems, verse 1, &c. chap. xii. add, in a parenthesis, as is the case, even while Moses was living, and no disparagement to him suffering it to remain, *Now the man Moses*, &c. Or, 2. He might have done it after Moses' death, by way of reproof to the people, and as an eulogium on his predecessor,

Respecting the authenticity of the book of Deuteronomy, it is to be observed, 1. Moses' name is at it the same as at the four preceding. Yet Mr P. says, "It is an anonymous work." But he might as well have said, *It is not in the bible*. 2. There is such an affinity of style and matter between this book and the three preceding, that plainly discover it to be the work of Moses as affirmed. 3. Moses speaks here much in the way Mr P. said the others wanted to prove them to be his writing, in the first person. But Mr P. seems to admit it to be the work of "some Jewish priest who lived" about "350 years after Moses." Mr P. might be led to think so, because Moses here confirms the order of priests. But does not Mr Paine by this admit of a system of divinity among this people, and of "Jewish" divi-

nity too? Now as it is universally allowed by that nation and others, that the theology of Moses only prevailed, Mr P. must either retract and admit of the received opinion of Moses and his writings, or else prove to us whose religious tenets this people followed "250 years after the time of Moses," which he pleases. Lastly, for the honour of Deteronomy, our blessed Lord answered his and our grand adversary in his attacks from this book. See Matt. chap. iv. 4. Deut. viii. 3. Matt. iv. 7. Deut. vi. 16. Matt. iv. 10. Deut. vi. 12. & x. 20. I do not wonder at Deists having such a pique at this sacred book, since it has been so successfully used in silencing hell itself.

Page 10. Mr Paine takes notice of "historical and chronological errors," which I shall particularly notice when we come to the book of Ezra.

As to the book of *Genesis* it is a record of things prior to Moses, hence he appears there only as a reporter. With regard to the subject or things related, Mr Paine forgets himself when he calls them "absurdities, or downright lies," and loses sight of the great design. 1. To inform men of the cause of the disorder of their natures, and the disorder in the world. 2. By the longevity of the antediluvians, propagation and protection of their species. 3. And such to remain as living chronicles of things and changes both divine and human. Which instead of being "absurdities," &c. are things worthy of a God.

"The bible," says Mr P. "is filled with murders," p. 11. And p. 15, 16, he says, "After this detestable order—in short, the matters contained in this chapter, (Numb. xxxi.) as well as many other parts of the bible, are too horrid for humanity to read, or decency to hear—it is a book of lies, wickedness and blasphemy." So, and all this liberty is taken under a pretence to clear God, and overturn the bible. Let us see, without taking notice at present of other parts of this pamphlet, of the same figures of blasphemous invectives, abuse and slander, and language too bad to be written but with a view to be overthrown, I beg leave to call Mr P.'s at-

tention. Sir, you must certainly have forgotten what you have read, for against these things are the cannons of its law expressly levelled, and upon the aggressors have its judgments been poured, as individuals, families, cities, nations—a world, can witness; in the execution of which, the hue and cry has been impiously raised against it, its author and those employed. Was ever any thing more strange? Its authenticity, its morality, its very justice, or rather God's has been impeached, who to keep his word in authority, has been obliged at times to exercise his justice in the punishment of offenders, and which acts of justice being recorded to deter others, you daringly call "horrid," "murders," &c. But further, to justify heaven's conduct, and wipe your indecent aspersions off from God and the bible, I refer you to the propositions laid down, page 6. We then begin with the Canaanites. You must know, Sir, these were God's creatures, had offended; he had borne long with them, they still stood out, stubborn and disobedient; he would bear no longer. How shall he punish, and punish best? He soon determines, and let all admire, a threefold justice done. There is an injured and insulted people, long the degraded vassals of an enemy to God and man. These shall be delivered—'Tis done, they are brought forward, and their oppressors are buried in the sea. Opposing nations shall feel the effects of God being with them; and in obedience to his will, they shall inflict vengeance on his rebels, and afterwards take possession of the alienated estates. Who in all this shall say, *What dost thou?* Yes, but "little children," &c. Your wrought-up feelings here, Sir, are futile, put on, put on to win on persons unsuspicious of your views, that with the greater grace you may vent your spleen upon the bible. But, 1. Has not God a right to do with his own as he pleases? 2. All must go to prevent contamination, and in this his goodness and wisdom are conspicuous, it being obvious to all, that youth soonest contaminates youth. 3. Little children would be better done for.

But, Sir, in your impeachment of God's "moral justice," for ordering or suffering such things, you have only done your work by halves; let me assist you. There are evils now existing between which and your lamented Canaan murders, there is as great a difference as between the twilight and the sun at noon. Look at yonder cities in flames, where only *four* escape; need I name a Sodom? a Gomorrah? A little farther back, and you may see our race extirpated excepting *eight*. What havock there? Millions on millions, from blooming infancy to withered age, all swept at once away! O mournful story! For this shall God escape your censure? But stop---Were it in our power to collect together from all the abodes of wretchedness earth's suffering mortals, and place them for a moment in your sight and hearing, what would you say of "moral justice" then? What are your Canaan scenes to these, to these that *now* exist? Or could the curtains of the damned be drawn, I principally mean fallen angels, and you discover that group depict in woe, *Reserved in chains of darkness*, &c. --- But here, perhaps, your faith will faultier, if so I'll stop. But, Sir, upon a retrospective view what think you now of God? Your system leaves you in the dark: deism, like the heathen oracles of old, is here struck dumb. Let me then assist you. And first, I recur to the supremacy of God, and this state as disordered. 2. I observe that all God's attacks upon his creatures have been *forced* upon him, as it were, in his own defence; this truth he proclaims in the ears of earth and heaven. Hear him then. Sir, and suffer him to speak. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great*, &c. &c. Genesis chap. vi. 5, 6, 7, Gen. xix. 13, &c. Deut. xviii. 9.---12. His injured honour, and deeply violated laws demanded vengeance, which, after repeated warnings, he was pleased to take by flood, by fire, and sword. With regard to the present calamities on earth know, Sir, that 1. We are a race of rebels, in grand attack against heaven itself: *They are all gone aside, there is none that doeth good, no not one*, in comparison. Psal. xiv. 3. 2. I hose suf-

ferers amongst us, are, as it were, state prisoners taken with weapons in their hands, or are the descendants of attainted criminals. 2. Many of these, when murther is cleared up, will cease to suffer. These are what we learn from scripture, and from facts, which are daily passing before us, from whence also we learn submission and gather comfort, resigning ourselves to God, from whom, you, cruelly unkind, would draw our affections, and against whom you would set our hearts ! Heavens forgive you, and set you right !

With regard to those I hinted at, *Reservet in chains*, &c. their suffering is the effect of their temerity. May we fear, lest we also for ours be made sharers in their punishment !

Things being thus, I trust it appears evident to all that Mr Paine has mistaken the character of God, and the nature of his word, which has led him so unbecomingly and irreverently to treat them as he has done ; and his inattention to the pious, faithfulness and station of Moses, has induced him unmercifully to affix to his character that of " most horrid, p. 14 ; and unfeelingly ranking him, p. 15, " among the most detestable of villains."

I now pass on to p. 8, where Mr P. says, " I proceed to the book of Joshua, and to shew that Joshua is not the author, that it is anonymous. The evidence I shall produce is contained in the book itself ; I will not go out of the bible for proof against the bible." This Mr P. has often promised, and which I have attended, and shall tenaciously adhere, to in supporting that book Mr P.'s objections are, 1. 1. " is written in the third person, " *His,* Joshua's, " *same was noised throughout all the country.*" P. That there are things referred to that could only belong to the times after Joshua's death. . . . Here Mr P. . . . in the case of the preceding books, sets off with a story, when he says, " It is anonymous," for on the very face of it stands, both in the Hebrew and English, *the Book of Joshua*. 2. That he was a writer, the book declares, chap. xxiv. 26. 3. The *third* person as I have proved, is proper-

est, and the prophetic style. 4. The *first* person is often used, and that too on the most solemn occasions, chap. xviii. 23, and part of the xxivth chapter. What a barefaced way is this of forging stories, and supporting error!

With regard to what is said of things after his death, we shall clear up with every thing of the kind in other books, by and by. As to Mr P.'s invectives and flourishes, p. 18. &c. amount to this, That he often forgets himself, the great Agent, cause and time; and also that the language was adopted to the received philosophy of the age.

The book of *Judges* we allow to be as Mr P. says, p. 21. "anonymous." And what then? Does that imply it had no author? Or that truth wants the name of a man to make it valid and give it sanction? And what has Mr P. got by it? Nothing, but that for once he has spoken the truth. But what are the friends to revelation advantaged by it? Much, for, 1. It goes to support Joshua and the books of Moses. 2. It asserts the great wickedness of the Canaanites whom God destroyed. 3. It proves that the judgments which came upon the Israelites afterwards were owing to their disobedience to God's revealed will.

As to the book of *Ruth*, p. 23. Mr P. is full of his low wit and scurrility, which we leave him to enjoy, and that as he attempts not to disprove it, I shall only just observe, he sees not the design. It is to harmonize the ways of God, and unite circumstances, all tending to elucidate the sacred story, bringing the lineage of the Redeemer thro' the family of Boaz and Ruth, to shew his connection with both Jew and Gentile.

"I come now," says Mr P. page 23. "to the two books of Samuel," which he adds are "anonymous, and without authority." In answer, 1. The books have his name in front. 2. He was a writer, 1 Sam. x. 25. 3. The first book is written in the first and third person. But after all, whether he wrote some or none of the first book, it cannot invalidate the history as the books stand. But, says Mr P. "The second book of Samuel begins

with an account of things that did not happen till four years after Samuel was dead," p. 25. Answer. 1. It is allowed that Samuel could not write the latter part of the first, nor any part of the second of those books. Yes, but the second has his name; I grant it; so has that of Ruth her name, but she was never considered as the writer. But observe, 2. The second book goes on with the thread of the story begun in the first, in which Samuel had acted so distinguished a part. 3. The second has, with the first book, the addenda of *Book of Kings*. But, Sir, you took no notice of this; no, as you are no friend to the name, you also knew it would not suit your purpose. But thus are you again detected, and instead of being as you say "anonymous," both books stand fair on the records of time, with a double title.

With regard to the two books of Kings and the two books of Chronicles, you confess, p. 26. that "It is impossible for us to know, what degree of credit to give to the matters related therein," &c. Implying, especially from your mode of reasoning, that some degree of credit is due; being myself satisfied, and letting others think for themselves, I shall give you time to consider who perhaps may again be what you once were, a lover of the bible. However, we have cause to be thankful for the many sacred injunctions, instructions and encouragements we find there, bearing analogy with and confirming the other sacred books already considered. Although those books treat much of war and bad men, it must be allowed there is much there to be learned of God's government over both kings and states. We have likewise to adore the great Supreme, that where our salvation is most concerned, things are the most clear and plain.

Page 33. Mr P. begins with *Ezra*, and acknowledges the book to have been "written immediately after the Babylonish captivity," adding "Ezra, one of the persons who returned, it is probable, wrote the account of that affair," page 35. This is enough. Here we have no trouble to prove the *writer, time, &c.* In like manner Mr P. bears his testimony to the reality of *Ne-*

Jeremiah, same page, but adds, " There is just as much of the word of God in those books, as there is in any of the histories of France or England." I observe, 1. There is much to be learned of the government and goodness of God in the histories of both nations, by a pious contemplative mind, though but seldom noticed by the writers. 2. In these books you may learn much of God. 1. How he afflicted a people he loved for their sins. 2. How he fulfilled his servants predictions, and delivered this people again from their distress and enemies.

But Mr P. complains of contradiction or error in Ezra's enrolment of the families which returned, p. 36. " The writer begins his enrolment in the following manner: chap. ii. ver. 3. " The children of Parosh, two thousand one hundred seventy and two," &c. making " a total at the 64th verse," of *Forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore.*" " But," adds Mr P. " whoever will take the trouble of casting up the several particulars," subjoined, " will find that the total is but 29,818, so that the error is 12,542." and exclaims, " what certainty then can there be in the bible for any thing?"

We must look into the bible itself. At the 59th verse, same chapter, we are told, *And these were they which went up from Tal-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Ad-dan, and Immer; but they could not shew their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel.* And at the 61st and 62d verses, it is further said, *And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai,—these sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found.* So it seems that those only who were pure Israelites were registered. It is said, ver. 64, *The whole congregation together was 42,360.* Now allowing the above seven families, verses 59 and 61, to have had upon an average about 2000 each, and this is not at all improbable, seeing the children of *Parosh* amounted to 2172, and Mr Painé himself seems to have seen nothing unaccountable in this statement, there

will be about 14,000, nearly 1500 more than this gentleman wants to make Ezra's number compleat, and his account true. In all controversies, it is a received axiom, that, to do justice and shew candour, we are not to raise difficulties where a thing appears at first sight dubious ; but if there remains a probable way of solving it, it will reflect honour on the antagonist to find it out, and combat that. But if he passes it by, endeavours to keep it out of sight, or seeks to cover it, should it be brought to light, and into the service and support of the subject contested, how deficient of candour, fair reasoning, and even justice itself, must such an opponent appear ? How fruitless, empty and vain must all his arguments be raised from such premises ?——How applicable this is to Mr P. on the present occasion, I leave for the judicious to determine. But to return.

So far it appears *Ezra* spoke the truth, and deserves our credit. - But next comes

Nehemiah, who Mr P. says, p. 36, “ in like manner, gives a list of the returned families, and of the number of each family.” However this gentleman gives us here a proof that he himself is not infallible. He observes that *Nehemiah* reckons, chap. vii. ver. 8, “ The children of Parosh, two thousand three hundred and seventy two.” (second edition) Now my bible tells me, at the same place, “ The children of Parosh, two thousand *one* hundred seventy and two.” I will not retort upon him here, only observe, that men fond of finding out faults in others, should be very careful to avoid them themselves ; for they look far worse in such than in any body else. But to clear up these difficulties, 1. *Nehemiah* seems to have numbered the people after they had been at Jerusalem some time, *Nehem.* chap. vii. 5. 2. The register he mentions might be an improved copy, for it is certain that many regulations in families took place after *Ezra* wrote the first account, which seems to have been done in Babylon on the people's setting out ; for it appears *Ezra* did not go up with them, but some of the princes. *Ezra* ii. 1, 2. He followed some time after, *Ezra* vii. 6.

3. The deficiency in *Nehemiah's* number may be

made up in the same way, alluded to in Ezra, seeing there are the same reasons, Neh. chap. vii. ver. 61, 63, 64. 4. Both accounts may be true; the one when the people set off from Babylon, and the other, after they had been a while at Jerusalem, and things had been regulated by those two active men.

Now, though Mr Paine says, p. 37, " These writers may do well enough for bible-makers, but not for any thing where truth and exactness are necessary," I am happy to find, that, after all, these " bible-makers," must stand fair in their reputation, with every candid, impartial inspector of the bible. I hope it will not be deemed impertinent, as this gentleman is so fond of exulting over these, and other ancient worthies, if I observe here, that he really seems to be either a bad man, having a design upon the public, or a thoughtless man unworthy of confidence, or credit, unless men will believe against conviction, and insult all their senses; for he appears no better than the men, at the worst, he endeavours to traduce. Take then which you please; only consider, ye votaries of his, in your serious, reflective moments, those moments in which you appear most like men accountable to God, you fall into the strain of Moses — David, and those men this gentleman derides. But if you will not, and all persuasion fails, and plainest facts, in opposition to the most forced and strained absurdities, have no weight with you, death will surely bring you into the views of the bible, and bible-makers. If this then be the case, and you have no certainty to the contrary; and no security, I say you have *no security*, where, when, nor how that leveller may come. Take then the bible with you, it cannot hurt you now, but it may help you; it may not help you then, but it may harm you. But further. However these men may appear in making, this gentleman seems but a lame hand in marring the bible; and pardon me if I add, he may do tolerably to amuse the ignorant, and uninformed; decoy the unwary, flourish with his pen, and make a little sport; but if he did not shew more adroitness in his office of Secretary to America, than he has in detecting the errors of

the bible, so far, I apprehend he must have cut but a poor figure in the estimation of the best informed.

But to return. Mr Paine seems aware of the dilemma, and the advantage that these books, Ezra, and Nehemiah, being true, must prove to the bible, he exclaims, p. 35. " But those accounts are nothing to us, nor to any other persons," &c. Yes, but they are, as I trust we shall prove.

1. Let it be remembered, that the state of things in a civil, but above all in a religious sense, became worse and worse among the Jews, from about the middle of Solomon's reign, as may be seen in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and the Prophets, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, till the punishment threatened overtook them by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah 39th chapter.

2. Pious men among whom was Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, attentive to the word of God, though in an enemy's country, and in a state of captivity, discovering the painful period of destined punishment nearly at an end, feeling for the indignities offered their religion, and countrymen, fasted and prayed, especially *Nehemiah* and *Daniel*, Neh. chap. i. 4, &c. Dan. ix. 2, &c. The Lord answered and inclined the heart of the then reigning prince, *Cyrus*, to accomplish his servants wishes, and his own intentions, Ezra i. 1, &c.

3. Ezra and Nehemiah were appointed to take the charge, &c. The first thing they set about was a reformation and regulation in the state, both of a civil and religious nature.

Now it is supposed, that till this time the various scriptures were like a choice collection of materials, tolerably fitted up and ready for putting together to form a building of the celestial order, of the most exquisite beauty, strength, and symmetry, which being then done, has so far stood for ages, to the honour of God, and to the comfort of good men— but to the grief of evil spirits, and to the envy of Atheists, Deists, and Infidels. And though these books had passed through many hands, such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, &c. and each

adding as God directed, yet had they never been in the order or perfection, Ezra left them. He seems to have been a man equally qualified for this task, both of explaining the old, and giving something new, according to the state of things and times, with any that went before him. Witnesses,

1. His being so much approved of by heaven, Ezra chap. viii. 23. and x. 1, 2.

2. He is said to be a *scribe* well acquainted with the law, &c. chap. vii. 6.

3. He is called a *priest*, Neh. viii. 2.

4. The people approved of him and his labours, Neh. viii. 1, 6.

To solve all difficulties it is most rational to have recourse to the most probable means. The most probable and rational way of solving all the apparent difficulties in the bible, is to consider the main of the work as belonging to the man whose name it bears; or to have recourse to what is written, and so far give it our belief as it corresponds with what we are more certain to be the word of God, by men approved of heaven, and as it tends to inform our judgments, mend our lives, and change our natures. Additions certainly have been made to various parts of the bible, especially to the most ancient parts, and instead of denying we glory in it. Instead of giving all up for those, we love them and the whole the better; because we the more discover the goodness and care of the Author of the whole, to succeeding generations, and by those are enabled to understand the whole the better.

Now those addenda in the bible which Mr P. falls so much out with, and can see no way how they could be there and strictly true, as if God and man ceased from their wonted gifts, grace and talents on the death of Moses, or Joshua, &c. and on account of which, he insults the Almighty, and throws the whole in his face; I say they are either,

1. Immediately following, as in *Deuteronomy*, last chapter, and the last of *Joshua*, &c. And how futile is this as a fault! Common sense must see these were

never to be received as the words of Moses, &c. any more than the witnesses names to a will can be called the man's will; and yet they are parts, and useful parts too; that instead of proving the thing "spurious," tend to confirm it as genuine and true.

2. Or, more *remote*, as is the case with many parts of the books investigated. Much of the goodness of God is seen in raising up men in succession of the same spirit, as he said of Joshua, Samuel, David, Ezra, &c. &c. to connect things soon after, as in the case of Joshua, &c. and more distant as Ezra, &c.

Now by this care of God, and attention of men, we have had the scriptures preserved, and modelled to our own time and capacities.

Ezra lived about 450 years before our Saviour, and about 1000 years after Moses. Great must have been the alteration in this revolutionary world, where men, places, and things are ever changing, in the space of 1000 years. To elucidate obsolete names, &c. and to connect distant with near, antique with modern, these men laboured, particularly Ezra, in all the contested parts, from Genesis to Ezra, none of which come lower, nor so low, for nearly two centuries, as his own time, and how much he was taken up with these things, we are expressly informed, as much so as can be expected from the concise manner of scripture on things of this nature, Ezra chap. vii. 10. *For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.*

Now, Sir, I hope you will no more say "those accounts are nothing to us," &c. We have been shewing, and beg leave to shew a little more to you, how much they concern both you and us.

1. In your animadversions on Ezra, p. 35. you talk of "compilers" of the bible, who so fit as Ezra in his day? And why might not inspired men have added, nay, why ought they not to have added, what was necessary through length of time and other local circumstances, a word, a sentence, &c. to make the subject plain, without incurring so much censure from you?

Nay, had they not, the Bible by this time might have been a collection of unintelligible jargon, and the pious would have had to lament such inattention.

2. You admit that Ezra and Nehemiah were "returned persons," p. 35. from the captivity to Jerusalem, &c. Do you not then by this, allow of the antecedent state, laws, and government of this people? How will you get off it?

3. By your admitting of these two men, Ezra and Nehemiah writing the books that bear their names, p. 35. Do you not allow all they have written, the apparent contradiction in their accounts of the returned persons excepted? which I trust by this time from what has been said on that head, has in good part vanished. Now, Sir,

1. Ezra is said in those books to be a *ready scribe*, &c. Ezra vii. 6.

2. He is said to be a *priest*, Neh. viii. 2. and tho' this class of men is not much admired by you, yet it proves there was a system of theology among this people.

3. That system is called in those books alternately the *law of Moses*, the *Law of Jehovah*, *Law of the God of heaven*, *Statutes of Israel*, &c.

4. These Ezra sought out and collected, he did not make new laws, but gathered the old, harmonized, and brought them forth pure and intelligible, with God's assistance and approbation, Ezra vii. 6. 10.

5. Ezra and Nehemiah acted, consistently themselves with the law of Moses; they fasted, they prayed, and confessed their sins, and in those solemn acts of devotion again and again, quote Moses' writings, Ezra ix. 4, 5, &c. Neh. i. 4, 5, 7, 8, &c. Neh. ix. 14.

6. After the law was collected and put in order, they read, expounded, published and enforced it, with the hearty concurrence and belief of the people, Ezra x. 4. Neh. viii. 1. to the 8th verse included.

To these laws, &c. the people solemnly bound themselves to adhere, Ezra x. whole chapter, Neh. viii. 9. to the end; and the 9th chap. ver. 1, 2, 3.

Now, Sir, what say you to these things ; what think you of the reality of Moses and the authenticity of the books that bear his name ? Do you still believe that all is fiction, cheat, deception ? What, all this a non-entity ! No Moses ? No law ? Ezra might as a priest, Nehemiah might as a magistrate, go great lengths to awe the people ; but can it be supposed they would go so far without a foundation ; and a tried one too ? yet even supposing this, if such a thing be supposable, would the people, so many thousand in number, allow it ?——What ? *disgrace* themselves by confessions, and load, loath, execrate and torment themselves with, and on account of their own and the sins of ages past ! and after all, tamely *bind* themselves to observe and keep all those rugged and forbidding statutes ! What Pope was ever witness to such implicit faith ? Or what despot ever saw a people so willing to be slaves ?

What monstrous absurdities must be here admitted, if no where else, to deny the bible ! What swallows must they have, to let down such raw materials as you offer to their faith, in contradistinction to common sense, matters of fact, and the universal consent of a whole nation, whose honour, ease, profit, yea, every thing, civil and sacred, concurred to induce them, if not true, to deny and withstand.

Now, Sir, we are come to this issue at length. You must deny what you have admitted, p. 35, and prove Ezra and Nehemiah non-entities, or cheats ; those people infatuated, believing a lie, publishing their own shame, for shame's sake, and in love with thralldom, without advantage ; or else you must retract all you have said to overturn the bible ; which you think proper. Here I fix my foot, take which side you please ; choose, choose, Sir, the latter, and be humbled - Cease from contending with God, he will prove too many for you. Give over loading his servants with reproach, *their Redeemer is mighty, he shall plead their cause*. Revile the bible no more, Truth is strong and will prevail. But if you will not be admonished, forget not that your own weapons are against you ; and if you will proceed, do so—

boast of your own sagacity, bully the Deity and his servants, ridicule the bible, as you cannot overturn it, at least you have not yet, and let your admirers join with you in trumpetting your praise, or---shame. But proceed we now to hear against, and justify the cause of God and truth in others.

"The next book in course," says Mr P. p. 37, "is the book of Esther," &c. Here is another of our mothers in Israel also rather ungenteelly treated by this gentleman. Fearful, perhaps, of the fascinating power of female charms, if not her morals, knowing they have brought to bend before them the mightiest of men, lest caught in the snare he should be brought to worship at her altar, and adore her God; offering violence to the purest virtue, he condemns and censures, whom he cannot pervert. Next comes,

"The book of Job," of whom you say "more disposed to be resigned than he is capable." page 37. This is bad philosophy and worse divinity. Curious indeed to see the stream rise higher than the fountain. But soon you say "Patience has but a small share in the character of the person of whom the book treats." "Bible-makers," &c. p. 39. are not more at a loss in what part of the bible to fix the book, than you seem at with yourself where to place the man, above the sun, or below the stars; with the sheep, or among the goats.

You had once an high opinion, you tell us, of the book of Job, p. 37, but you have learned since that it "does not belong to the bible." What may we understand from what you here speak? Is not this a very high compliment, Sir, you pay the bible? But we will take no advantage of you; truth needs neither declamation nor defamation to support it; we leave those to its enemies. But why not belong to the bible? It cannot be for the immorality of the person treated of, according to your account, nor for what the book contains, if you are to be credited, p. 37. only some certain phrases, page 33, which going to the utmost, you in the same page apparently admit the propriety of. But there are two men you have found out, who help you in this matter.

But I have to observe, these are brothers of the scornful tribe, one of them especially, who in his day, had as little regard for the bible as Mr P. and both of them are very erroneous: Besides, I thought you promised to keep to the bible, p. 6. 10. 18. You are hard pushed, and find bible-evidence comes in but slowly to your help, and are, 'tis likely, glad of any assistance. Well, you will now permit me to bring my evidence next, in favour of this book. See then Ezek. chap. xiv. 14. James v. 11. Considering where these men stand, and what you have allowed respecting the bible, you cannot but admit of their testimony, as, at least, equally valid with *Ahenexra*, the Spanish, Jewish doctor, as I suppose you mean, and *Spinza*, the wonderful Spinoza, "whose name is d—d to everlasting fame." If you would allow me, I would bring a *third*, I mean the Deity. Hear him speak, Job i. 8. Would he say so much of a man, an account of whom he would deem unworthy of a place among his servants?

Your objections to it from its being "the production of a mind cultivated in science," &c. p. 38. are all convincing proofs to me that it was written by Moses, *who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*, men famous for natural philosophy and astronomy.

As to your objections of grecisms, you must know they are only in the translation, not in the Hebrew. The translators adopted themselves to improved society, and following the Greek translators, they used Pleiades, instead of *Kimah*, and Orion, in the place of *Kesil*, &c. the two original words, which may be seen in the margin of some bibles.

You might as well deny Englishmen the honour of being acquainted with some useful sciences among us, seeing many of their technical names are purely Greek. And as justly might an enemy to revelation, on taking up an English bible, and on reading, *Moses said unto the people, if ye will hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord*, &c. exclaim, Moses never said this, he never said so in his life. This is English, and Moses knew nothing of English. Besides, this is printed, and

I'll prove printing was not found out for ages after Moses. Here are truths that cannot be controverted, but do they overturn the bible? No; no more than Mr Paine's objections.

After giving the Jews, those living oracles for God and Moses, a wipe, you hasten forward to tell us, that men formerly made "statues and images," p. 40. 'Tis true, they did; but amidst the multitude made and *worshipped* by the ancients, I do not at present remember any made to your delivering divinity, *Impossibility*, vide preface, p. 10, bottom. You then add, "I pass on to the book of *Psalms*, of which it is not necessary to make much observation." Some of them, it appears, you are pleased with; others, you say, "are very revengeful." How easy is it, Sir, to see the mote in our brother's eye, without discovering the beam in our own? You further add, "It is however an error, or imposition, to call them the *Psalms of David*," &c. p. 40.

Who, in defending the authenticity of the *Psalms*, ever gave the honour of them all to David? whatever some may have said inadvertently in this way, you can only speak so knowingly against them; making the innocent inattention of some, the bad argument of your own purpose and design.

You seem, Sir, all along perfectly at variance with God and man, and at last, apparently fall out with yourself. Your very senses you seem an enemy to, or you would not deny your eyes their proper functions. If you did not, would they not inform you of what is to be seen and read both in the Hebrew and English, that some of them are the production of other holy men? But thus you take advantage of God's servants, in the revenge you ought to take upon yourself.

The plain obvious title, in the original as well as English, is *The Book of Psalms*, and whose, you are told from the original as you go along, or nothing is said.

It is very probable the 137th Psalm might have been written by Ezra, on the return of the Jews from their captivity. Its author is not mentioned.

Thus, sacred book! have we another evidence of thy

fair excellencies, and thine enemy's designs. Thou, too open with a view to cheat, and he too much blinded to discover thy matchless beauties, or his own mistakes—his own shame!

"*The book of Proverbs*," Mr P. will have to be "a collection," p. 40. "from authors belonging to other nations." It may or it may not; the book no where says all there are *only* Solomon's; and as we have seen hitherto, how careful we ought to be of taking any thing on Mr P.'s bare authority, so ought we to be aware here also. But he says "some of the proverbs did not appear till two hundred and fifty years after the death of Solomon." Quoting as proof, "*These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.*" Marvellous sagacity! wonderful discovery! But seriously, might not these have been long in use among the pious before that time? Indeed it appears plainly they were, and that this godly prince, employed those men to write copies of to be sent abroad, that they might be more generally known.

"*The book of Ecclesiastes*," you seem pretty well to admit of; but with other faults, the author "at last," you say, page 41, became "melancholy." That is, he became a *penitent* as he ought, and as some others justly should. *Melancholy*, uneasy, that he had spent so much precious time—such uncommon talents, to so little good purpose. Forsaking the bible-way, as many have done, some of whom as yet *glory in their shame*, he forgot God, his duty, and his soul; at the recollection of which, he found nothing could give him ease but his return to God; and that others might learn wisdom at his expence, he wrote that excellent book the *Ecclesiastes*, or *Preacher*. It was kind, it was just; it was what he owed both God and man: And there he stands a distinguished, disappointed votary of the world; as a beacon to warn others from splitting on that rock; and as a monument of heaven's forbearance and pity, encouraging the guilty to return, and that none such need despair of mercy.

With regard "to the men called prophets," you tell us, page 43, you leave their character "to another part of the work." But here you inform us of *Isaiah*, that the book ascribed to him is "one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together," &c. "and that a school-boy would scarcely have been excusable for writing such stuff." Let me observe, It is not the elegance, but the doctrines of the bible we defend; and yet even on this head, we are ready to meet every bible-hater in the world, particularly respecting the prophet you so much degrade. To be short, if I mistake not, what language has to win upon the mind to gain consent, we find in him.

As to *Isaiah's* prophecies, how they were *all* accomplished I leave for the bible, that book *you* agreed to decide every thing by, to determine; the principal and most interesting of which to us, we shall have to take notice of in the gospels.

As to your forced meanings and comments, with your falsehoods, impertinent and impious ribaldry, and ridicule, I leave for yourself to enjoy; and your friends to be delighted with; we shall have to meet you on this subject, where you again repeat your blasphemies, in another place.

"Jeremiah. This prophet, as he is called, lived in the time that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem," &c. p. 47. Here is a confirmation from an enemy, that such a man existed, and existed at the time the bible speaks of. So then, for once Mr Paine and this book agree; it is not then quite full of "lies," nor is it altogether "spurious." Has, Sir, the late dreadful stretch of thought to falsify the greatest truths in the bible, and the horrid perversion of your inventive faculties to substitute indecent language and invectives, in the room of the purest sentiments, and the most interesting subjects to mankind, alarmed your conscience? Shall I congratulate you as a man self-awakened in the awful moment of his mansion tottering, with just time to escape ere it buries him in its ruins? Nay, alas! you soon fall back into your old principles again, that was but a short-lived lu-

cid interval; you just on the back of it add, " Every thing relating to Jeremiah shews him to have been man of an equivocal character," p. 47. and this you endeavour to prove by his metaphor of the potter, chap. 18th. Really, Sir, I know not how you figure as a legislator, but your dexterity as a divine, is, in my judgment, far below mediocrity. In your comment upon the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th verses of that chapter, page 48, you discover not only that you understand not the bible, but that you are ignorant of the different parts of speech. Those are the *conditions* expressed, not the *predictions* of God's threatened vengeance, which to escape, all-gracious as HE is, dealing with men as free agents, the guilty have only to comply, &c. Than which, instead of " stupidity," nothing discovers more the beauty, harmony, and excellency of any code of laws, especially " the bible."

The book is objected to further from " The historical parts," of it being written " in the most confused condition," page 48. In answer to this charge, and to those of a similar nature in other parts of the bible, I would just observe, the business of prophets, was not to write the history of the times; they were to speak and write as God commanded, and circumstances called, not to gratify the curiosity of vain minds; for those who will not give them credit for things as they now stand, would not believe them had they been more minute in their details.

The next charge consists " of duplicity and false prediction," p. 52. where you " mention two instances." And as to your conclusion it is as severe, as your mistake is notorious. " This man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie," &c. Where have you proof it was one? I want that—But you tell us " for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah to make," &c. *ibid.* No, he did not go on purpose; but are you sure he did not " make his supplication" to him at that time? We will look at the bible ourselves. You set off at the 17th verse of the 38th chapter, but I wish to draw your attention to the beginning of the interview at the 14th verse, where

it appears the king sent for the prophet. Do you, Sir, know the nature of a "supplication"? Tell me then is there any thing of it in the 15th verse? Do you understand in what manner an answer to a supplication should be worded? Pray inform me, if there is not something of it at the 16th verse? O, Sir, what are you not ready to say to disparage the bible? "Duplicity" argues deceit, and what deceit does there appears in this man of God? Instead of that, what faithfulness and courage does he discover even to the king himself, ver. 18? Had he been in the Convention, he could scarcely have said more *of*, than he then said *to*, the king.

Next the "false prediction;" let us see how Mr P. will come off here. You refer us, Sir, to the 34th chapter of Jeremiah, ver. 2—6. "Thus saith," &c. p. 53. then in the same page you deny all, and in your usual positive way add, "what then can we say of these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?" Hard words, and unkind treatment. However, there is one thing gives us comfort, and them honour, you cannot *prove* them to be such; no, nor can you prove that *one* thing failed of being exactly fulfilled as the prophet spake. That the Babylonians took the city and burned it; took Zedekiah and carried him to Nebuchadnezzar and that he saw him; that he was carried to Babylon and put in prison, we have only to look at the 39th chapter, and the 10th and 11th verses of the 52d. At the same time, while these things were told him as inevitable, if he did not go forth to the princes the king of Babylon had sent against Jerusalem, chap. xxxviii. 17, 18, &c. God commanded the prophet to assure him, after all, that he *should not die by the sword*, that is, according to the sacred style, a violent death, which as a prisoner he might naturally be led to fear, chapter xxxiv. 4, &c. Now I confess, from the silence of scripture, we are at a loss fully to prove the accomplishment of the promise here made to this prince; but shall we give up the bible on that account, on account of a thing so insignificant in itself, especially as it tells us no where to the contrary? Our opponents think us

fools in believing the bible, with evidence for it every way, clear as the sun ; and to give it up for this, they might justly think us more than mad. Remember, Sir, in the above concession, we give you all you have a right to, and would have done the same before, but happily for us, and unfortunately for you, we have met with no such opportunity all the way we have hitherto come. So much for the honour of the book you hate, and we love ; you depreciate, and we defend.

Now, Sir, though we cannot fully prove, we will offer a few conjectures respecting the fulfilment of the above promise to Zedekiah, and we call upon you to overturn them, or prove to the contrary.

1. God had often promised he should not die by the sword of his enemies.

2. That he might die in peace though a prisoner, was not impossible ; nay, how many princes in prisons have lived and died in greater peace, than those ruling at large ?

3. Was it, is it an uncommon thing to honour a dead enemy ? A dead king could do no injury, and therefore out of respect to royalty, the king of Babylon might order, or at least suffer, the Jews there to do all the rites of honourable burial to their deceased sovereign.

4. What language could be more proper on the affecting occasion, respecting fallen majesty, than that which God said should be used as part of the funeral oration ? *And will lament thee, saying, Ah, Lord !*

You exultingly exclaim, page 53, as if you had as certainly gotten the bible and all its writers in chains, as Nebuchadnezzar had the unfortunate king of Judah, " Thus much for another of the lying prophets, and the book that bears his name." Suffer me, Sir, to join the chorus, and with greater truth, and greater credit, prove the reverse if you can, add our part, *Thus much for another FAITHFUL Prophet, and the sacred book that bears his name.*

At the 54th page you express yourself thus, " The remainder of the books ascribed to the men called prophets, I shall not trouble myself much about, but take

them collectively into the observations I shall offer on the character of the men called prophets." In your remarks here, and which you carry on for two or three pages, we give you credit, and believe you right in some things, and in others we consider you very wrong. We admit of your being right in,

1. Your allowing and confirming the certainty of there being in the times you allude to, such men as prophets.

2. That those men foretold things to come.

3. We believe you right in the affinity you make between that of a prophet and a poet, and think with you, that there is not a word in the Hebrew bible signifying a prophet, that does not mean a poet; for as they received the divine *afflatus*, and were honoured with the manifestation of the greatest and most important truths, so their ideas were raised, like those of poets on the noblest subjects, to take in the grandest objects, and were then expressed in strains of the sublimest language.

But, Sir, we differ widely from you, 1. In your saying that the predictions of the prophets were "not to any distant future time," p. 55. Isaiah's predictions of *Cyrus* building, or forwarding the building of Jerusalem, chap. xlv. 28. could not be less, according to your own account, p. 44, than 150 years from the prophet's death; and of the virgin's Son *Jesus*, or *Emmanuel*, between seven and eight hundred years. This I assert here, but I *assert* it, do remember! from the bible; and from the bible, I shall *prove* it in another place.

2. That the moderns, not the ancients, honoured those men, or considered them in any respectful light, page 55. Here, Sir, you are totally wrong, for it is solely to them we are indebted, next to God himself, for those precious writings of the prophets; and it is from the judgment they passed upon those men and those writings, together with the gradual accomplishment of the predictions in their proper time, and the excellencies and suitability of the scriptures, each rising generation discovered, that those men and those books have been so long

in such great repute, by the wisest and best of men ; and so many bright and illustrious characters have stood up their willing votaries, and bold defenders, both among the ancients and moderns, and would reflect the greatest honour on any nation or any age.

3. To believe you we must suppose that those men lived *only* to oppose each other, page 55. There was indeed a necessity for the true prophets to oppose the false ; as much so as for believers, to oppose infidels ; the lovers of the bible, those who revile it. Seeing false prophets as much opposed the honour of God, and interests of men, in their day, as modern Deists do in ours.

4. That " all had immediate reference to themselves," p. 55. in their predictions. What immediate reference had Jeremiah's prediction of deliverance from captivity seventy years from that time ; or the overthrow of Babylon to him, an old man, and a favourite of that court ?

Now, let all men in their senses bear witness, what crude indigested stuff, what self-evident falsehoods you palm upon the world. I leave all your banter and poor low wit to yourself and party, as they are great helps at a non-plus, without which I know not what you would do ; real friends to God, to truth, to man, have better weapons ; they have the scriptures---the bible, and to this you are equally bound to abide by with us, from what you have over and over declared, or eat your own words. Now you must prove from that book, we are wrong, and also from it your assertions are true, ere we give up, which you have yet *no where* done ; or if we prove from the bible you are wrong, and your assertion false ; that book to be true, and we right, which, I appeal to candour, has all along been done, you must, Sir, give up, or find yourself ranked, not by the rash, hasty, inconsiderate, but by the most dispassionate and judicious, I was almost going to say by Deists themselves, among those, with whom you name the prophets, page 53. I am really loath to follow your example, but for once feel the weight of your own weapons, even, Sir, among " impostors and liars."

You seem much inclined to give credit to Ezekiel and Daniel, p. 57, but to obviate the great and weighty truths they declare, you endeavour to make it appear, that with the loss of their liberty, their senses were almost gone, and yet they retained in their "reveries," a love for their country, religion, and laws; and you *wisely* add, "Had the numerous commentators and priests, who have foolishly employed or wasted their time in pretending to expound and unriddle those books, been carried into captivity, it would greatly have improved their intellects," p. 58. A very high compliment, though undesigned, to those men and their work. But in answer to many things you say in two or three pages here, I have to observe,

1. As to the mysteries and mode of writing in those prophecies, they are agreeable to the beautiful variety God discovers in carrying on his great designs, and the revelation of his will and ways, amongst men. *God, says the bible, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.* But it seems, unless heaven keep a kind of monotony in the manifestations of his pleasure and designs to his creatures, some men are so disgusted as to stick at nothing to render them ridiculous, and unless they can circumscribe the Deity to act within the circle of their own capacities and caprice, there is hardly a name too bad to be affixed to his servants and proceedings.

2. Whatever state those men were in, it plainly appears they had a country, religion, and laws; and what that country and religious system were, we clearly learn from the frequent mention made of them in the most undisguised and obvious manner, Jerusalem, and the temple worship. How do your concessions here also, admit of Moses and his law in the fullest sense that any lover of the bible can wish for?

3. You seem to forget yourself, which indeed, Sir, is nothing new with you, when you talk of the restraint those men were under, which was the cause of them using such dark and mysterious phrases in their writings, &c. Had they been galley slaves, or in the *Lux-*

embourge, where it would really appear you had formed your ideas of them and their condition, your statement would have some colour of truth ; but pray how much like a “ prisoner of war ” did *the third ruler in the kingdom* look ? How much like a “ state prisoner ” did the man appear to whom the king himself paid divine honours ? Whatever restraints you may fancy, from the gloom of your prison, these men laboured under in writing, it is plain to all the world they were under none in speaking and acting. But,

4. Their predictions spake for themselves then, and how they have spoken since in the various ages of the world, for God, for the bible, and for the prophets, let the different monarchies in their rise and exit, determine. Call you the predictions what you please, they have the majority of nations as their interpreters, and the greatest number of men in the world to prove their fulfilment so far, and their exact fulfilment, some sooner, some later, but all in due order, as the prophets saw and promulgated. Are you not weary yet in opposing such clear proofs of the truth of scripture ? Yea, so clear in only these two prophets, that if there were a thousand mistakes in the other parts of the bible, yet, thank heaven, there is not *one*, there is here, I think, enough to strike deaf and dumb every enemy to revelation and the book of God. Indeed, Sir, without a flourish, every step you take to detect the fallacy of the bible, and expose its writers, tends only to involve yourself in greater shame than what your aim is to expose them to ; and more and more substantiates the truth of that book, it appears your glory to vilify.

You cannot but know that the judgment upon Egypt, which you take notice of at the 11th verse of the 29th chapter of Ezekiel, p. 60, is an hyperbolical figure of speech, common in poetical writings, and the bible ; indicative of severe afflictions, &c. on part of that kingdom, as is specified at the 12th verse, which you seem not to have looked at, *from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia*.

At the 6th page, having passed over in silence several

of the other prophets, you pitch upon *Jonah* as a subject of much ridicule and great mirth; here you run on at great length, blending truth with falsehood in your usual way, doing all your humorous fancy helps you in to make a little sport for your votaries; but as you do not deny, or bring any thing from scripture to prove the falsity of the sacred story, I shall beg leave to withdraw from the scene of such daring indignity to God and truth, leaving you and your companions to enjoy your mirth---but, remember there is a day of reckoning.

"Here now," says Mr Paine, page 64, "remain only a few books, which they call the books of the lesser prophets, and as I have already shewn that the greater are impostors, it would be cowardice to disturb the repose of the little ones." It is perhaps wisdom in you too to let them rest, because you would not find that advantage in all, you did in one of the least of them, you just now made bold to call from his repose. Besides, the fear of a Philistine may possess you, apprehensive, that a little David may do more execution than a great Goliath. But you go on, same page,

"I have now gone thro' the bible, as a man would go through a wood, with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie," &c. Here comes the finishing with a witness! Regardless of the little impropriety of speech, I hasten to address the feller. A word with you Mr *Woodman* ere we part. 1. I own a congruity here, God's servants are often compared to trees. But,

2. By whose appointment did you enter the "*wood*?"

3. For *what* did you enter the wood? To cut down every tree, or only some? If the first, you are an unfaithful servant, for some you have left standing according to your own account; if the last, who *marked* them off for you? The *owner* or a *stranger*? If the former, why let them stand so long, take such delight in, speak so honourably of, and do such great things for, and great things by them, as myriads of millions can witness, for near 4000 years, and still as fertile as ever, and all at once to deliver them over to your course cutting axe? This, I confess, puzzles me more than the most abstruse

point in all the book of mysteries, even heightened with all the art of aggravated malice, and all the rancour of refined spleen—But here I acknowledge myself a sceptic, as great a one on this head, as Mr P. is with regard to the bible. If the latter, a stranger, you know your name, you know your crime. *He that entereth not by the door, I am the Door*, says the great Master, *is a thief and a robber*. Hear then your destiny. *Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hang ed about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea*. But really, Sir, though this is awful, yet I think as to your having felled these trees, you are *actually* in little danger from that quar-ter. Whatever you may have done *intentionally*, I know not, but in *fact* you will, I conceive, be found less guilty than you seem to wish. You say, “I have gone through the bible, as a man would go through a wood” to “fell trees. Here they lie.” Is it so in- deed? Truly there appeared as if an enemy had been in the enclosure, but as to the trees themselves, we found and left them standing; yet let us look again. Here fresh and fair stands *Moses* by the testimony of increas- ing evidence. *Joshua* and *Samuel*, remain firmly rooted as at first. *Ruth* and *Esther*, the woodman we own, has treated with little truth and less civility, but the blasts of calumny fell none of God’s trees, and therefore these stand firm. With regard to *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, the axe hastily applied, missed its aim, and rebounding, wounded the woodman’s head; so these escaped, and stand like trees in summer, clad in all their blooming honours. Hail ye oaks of *Bathan*, ye glory of the fo- rest! flourish for ever! *Job*, *David*, and *Salomon* are found unmoved. *Isaiab*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, and *Da- niel*, continue all in their station; a few scratches, it must be allowed, appear upon the bark of some of them, but no incision; a little time, a summer or two, and they will not be known. The rest of the trees remain untouched, one excepted, with whose brush-wood the feller has made a little noise, but the tree itself re-

mains entire. Brave woodman ! with the last you made quick dispatch ; half scores at once, and that without a blow, was wonderful !

But Mr Feller, a word or two more. You must know, it is not enough to enter the forest, view the trees, exclaim against their age, and scratch their bark, or pluck their hoary honours off, and then cry, " Here they lie ! " Their owner and their friends cry, " Here they *stand* ! " and joy to see them. Yes, ye choice cedars, ye glory of creation ! let the bramble decry you, or the woodman insult you ; He, by whose hand you were planted, and by whose power you have stood, speaks, *No feller shall come up against you, and no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.* Happily for us, such only clean you of your hurtful mosses, or clear you of encumbrances, which, from length of time, and transplantations into various soils and climates (languages and tongues) you could not but contract ! And still you are the trees reared in Palestine, flourishing in Europe ; exotics once, now natives of the soil.

Fear not then, O men, to take shelter under their covert. Come, take, confidently take, the advantages of their umbrage, and eat their pleasant fruit. Here are the richest of dainties, here is food for souls. *See, taste, determine* for yourselves !—we wish no more.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

I should think I offered an insult to God, to truth, and common sense, did I follow you through all your impious buffoonery in the New Testament, any more than in the Old ; for the further you go, the more daringly bold and foolhardy you appear, as if fast filling up the measure of your iniquity ; but I shall endeavour to meet you on the principal and most material parts.

" The New Testament, they tell us," say you, p. 64, " is founded upon the prophecies of the Old ; if so, it must follow the fate of its foundation." All this is true,

and certainly they must, and will, stand or fall together. However, from what is past, we have a fair prospect of the stability of both.

Page 65, you say "It is not then the existence or non-existence, of the persons" meaning Joseph, Mary and Jesus, "that I trouble myself about; it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as it is told in the New Testament, against which I contend." Here then there is no denying our Redeemer as to his actual existence, &c. but "the fable" the things told of him, You subjoin "the story taking it as it is told, is blasphemously obscene." No, Sir, in the account itself is the greatest modesty; and I cannot help observing, *Unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind, and conscience is defiled.*

But let us now enquire into the "fable," as you term it, or the things that are related respecting our Saviour, and see whether you are not with De Foe*, basely making a "fable" of truth.

Let it be remembered, that the descriptions of Jesus Christ as to his conception, person, doctrines, &c. were not things hastily propagated, or received at random, as the report of the day, or the wonder of a moment. No; they had been the talk, the hope, and expectation of the wisest and best of men for thousands of years, particularly among the Jews, and especially for about seven or eight hundred years, till the happy era arrived which ushered in among men the Lord of Glory in their own nature.

It was predicted in the prophets, whose authenticity I trust is established on the broadest basis, and surest foundation, that there should a remarkable person descend from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; who should be born in Bethlehem, of a virgin of the family of David, in the time of the second temple's standing, mean in circumstances, and introduced by a forerunner, should be eminent for piety, wisdom, and benevolence; wonder-

* The writer of Robinson Crusoe

ful in the actions of his life ; should be rejected of the Jews, put to death ignominiously, and rise the third day. Great calamities to come upon the Jews soon after, and truth to spread among the Gentiles, &c. &c. That these things were accomplished at the time, place and manner in the person called Jesus Christ, we have nations and histories to record, especially Jews and the *New Testament*, where these things are detailed ; the subject of which, whilst the astonishment of angels, and the joy of good men, becomes the object of your satire and ridicule. However, Sir, this is the Virgin's Son, in whom we glory, not your fancied one, p. 46. which carries absurdity grossly absurd in the very face of it, our Redeemer and Emmanuel, God with man, Matth. i. 23. The true Messiah, John iv. 25. Concerning whom and his doctrines, wherever named and most attended to, instead of being " stained with blood," unless that of his own and best friends, " and marked with desolation," p. 45, excepting by enemies, every place in Christendom---the whole world, has perpetual cause of joy in both, for it is there, and there only, man lives every way like man.

I have considered your account of things for some pages, and disorder, obscenity, false reasoning, and blasphemy, the rankest I ever met with, apart, the most material of your objections, if I mistake not, consist of contradiction, and deficiency of repetition, these I shall attend to. But,

1. I deny the conclusion of your " position," p. 66. for two genealogical accounts of one person may not agree in all things, and yet be both true. 2. I deny your assertion, by implication, same page, that Matthew and Luke " contradict each other in every particular," for they set off and end together ; which you seem aware of, page 67, discovering what a strange and uncandid reasoner you are. If you were to talk so as a witness in any court of judicature, your evidence would pass for nothing, unless it were to help you for an hour or two to the pillory.

We have in Matthew the genealogy of Christ by his

supposed father Joseph from David ; which, to the believers of bible history, will appear very satisfactory, as it is the account given of the lineal descent of the Kings of Judah, as recorded in the Books of Kings and Chronicles.

As to your story of old batchelors, page 69, it is like the most you say, the effects of your inattention. One would think the vapour of your pen affected your intellects, you are so apt to run into absurdities, and so prone to give truth the lie. Solomon was not David's eldest son, as would need to be the case according to your reasoning. No, he must have been the son of his old age. *You* say Solomon died at the age of 58, page 42, and the *bible* says he reigned 40 years, 1 Kings xi. 42. He must then have been only about 18 when his father, carrying the marks of old age more than most we read of, left him the throne.

Now, Sir, you who are so fond of denouncing and condemning the bible as contradictory, &c. how must you appear when plain matters of fact, with your own signature, meet you full in the face, *proving* you to be, what you *say* others are ? If you set off with so barefaced a violation of truth, dashing away to expose others, whilst every flourish proclaims your own thame, how many are you likely to make before you reach the end ? I leave you and your friends to reckon.

By Luke we have the genealogy of Mary the mother of Jesus down from David.

It is very singular, that after you have argued matters as the work of two men, for four or five pages, you contr, as in p. 69, to say, " The first question, however, upon the books," &c. "*Doubtfulness*," then all you *have* said, and *now* say, or *will* say, if you are to be believed in any thing, *has been*, and *is*, and *will* be in doubt. We must examine this, for your adding by way of come off, " The state therefore, that the books are in," doubtful, " proves against themselves, as far as this kind of proof can go," is nothing ; for it certainly must prove as much *for*, as it can *against* them.

You add, p. 70, " The presumption is, that the books said to be written by Matthew, &c. are imposi-

tions." And "The disordered state of the history in these four books, the silence of one book upon matters related in the other, and the disagreement that is to be found among them, implies, that they are the production of some unconnected individuals," &c. I cannot help, observing what seems apparent, *doubt* hinders you believing truth, *presumption* leads you to such daring impiety as blazons almost every page of your divinity; and *implication* helps you to pervert the right. But,

1. As to "the disordered state of the history," &c. In answer to this, let it be remembered, this is not a history of kings, or their actions, but an account of a few individuals, little noticed, and little known but among themselves; nowise ambitious of honour or regard; the beginning of a novel system, and a new sect, who without much erudition, simply relate matters among themselves, leaving others to judge of them, as they found those things and their lives to accord.

Thus four different persons, having some knowledge of the prophets, compiled, separately at different times the annals of that æra, which commenced with the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies, and the appearance of the long-expected *Shiloh*, or *Messiah*. Convinced of the truth of these things themselves, as eye and ear witnesses, and having the whole nation as spectators, they well knew they had only to mention some particulars for the conviction and gaining of the consent of the candid, leaving the truth of their simple unadorned narratives to win its way, by the power of that spirit with which they were enabled to collect and publish those things, into their yielding minds. Knowing that facts, however self-evident, and enriched with all the gracefulness of language, would avail nothing without the power of God. And thus they, without standing upon the nice punctilios of intervening circumstances, reported and set down what each believed was likely to do most good. Hear the men themselves. Matt. chap. i. v. 1, &c. Mark i. 1. Luke, conscious of the truth, dedicated his gospel to one apparently in an eminent station, chapter i. ver. 1, &c. 1 John, chap. i. ver. 1, &c.

I make no apology for using scripture, 1. Because it was agreed on, and I acceded to it. 2. Mr Paine quotes scripture in *doubt*, to force it to speak against the bible ; I quote scripture in *confidence*, knowing that it is fully sufficient to support the bible.

2. " The silence of one book upon matters related in the other," is another objection. This to me appears a mark of heaven's interposition, in the matter as well as manner ; that amidst so much to be said, every one should separately add his part to the sacred stock. How deficient of thought and common sense must a man be, who expects not deficiencies in the short account of an evangelist, respecting what another had said before him, when he was inclined and assisted to *gather up* only, as it were, *the fragments* of a subject so multifarious, and concerning a person of whom one of themselves has said, however distant they have kept from each other in that sense, *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose, a strong hyberbole, that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written*, John, chap. xxi. 25. But,

3. " The disagreement that is to be found among them," &c. This is a weighty objection if true ; but it is a comfort to think, its foundation is *doubtfulness*, p. 69. Let us examine this charge a little. The apparent disagreement of Matthew and Luke, in the genealogical account of our Redeemer, has been greatly objected to, but I trust sufficiently cleared up.

Your next complaint on this head, p. 70, is concerning the annunciation of the angel, &c. you say Matthew informs us that it was to Joseph, and Luke to Mary. Examining the passages, Matth. chap. i. ver. 18, &c. Luke i. 26, &c. which you might justly fear looking at, and of course neglect setting down, there appears the greatest congruity ; and if you would but look attentively in the first chapter of St Luke, you would see other witnesses besides Joseph and Mary, to this uncommon event.

You next find fault with the story of Herod destroy-

ing the children, p. 70, and say, it " belongs altogether to the writer of the book of Matthew ; and not one of the rest mentions any thing about it." In answer to this and to all such frivolous objections, it was enough that *one* of them mentioned it. You also seem to forget that the journey of Jesus Christ fulfilled a prophecy ; and that the infant John lived securely distant from the scene of cruelty.

You, in p. 71, attack the evangelists respecting the manner of wording the inscription put upon the cross. " Not any two of these writers agree," say you, " in reciting, *exactly the same words*." However, all the *four* exactly agree in declaring, 1. That the illustrious sufferer was a *King*. And, 2. That He was *King of the Jews*, which even unbelief itself cannot but admit, was sufficient for the confirmation of all that had been predicted of the Messiah, and all that Jesus had said of himself.

The account of the crucifixion is sufficiently clear with all its concomitants, after all you say, p. 72, &c. to every reasonable mind, if but properly attended to, as related by the four Evangelists. Here we have set before us in emblems and figures, the Jewish ceremonies abolished ; a new way made to the holy of holies, and the resurrection of the body, yea, life and immortality brought to light, to day light, thus by Jesus Christ, Hebrews, chap. x. verse 1, &c. &c. I really pity this gentleman, he is so much obliged to walk in trammels. He dares not look beyond the limits of a few detached scriptures, fully consistent all circumstances attended to, nor stir beyond the precincts of his own commentaries. Indeed, I know not what he would do, were it not for the frisks of his own pen, with which he now and then amuses himself a little. If the belief of the bible hampered its votaries, as much as the unbelief of it does its enemies, I should not wonder at Mr P. rising as a man fond of liberty, to extricate his enslaved fellow creatures ; but when they are walking at large, with prospects the most extensive, and expectations the most flattering, he daringly to invade their territories, and deceitfully at-

tempting to insnare and lead them blindfold to the gloomy mansion of deism, where all is "*doubt*" and uncertainty, how should he be shunned, and his maxims detested? Insensible must that man be to his own prerogatives, and the mind to its immortal powers and privileges, tamely to submit to his shackles, or to be bound in such fetters.

You say, page 73, "The writer of the book of Matthew should have told us," &c. No, it was enough to relate it for the pious to believe; it was enough being related, if but by one, for the Jews and enemies living to deny. But this was a talk, none then near there, if any, any where else, was foolhardy enough to undertake. No, it is much easier at this distance of time and place, to "*doubt*," and turn into ridicule, than it would then have been, or indeed *now* is, to *prove* those things false. Nor would more, even entering into the indecent, unbecoming minutia, and ribaldry double distilled, of Mr Painc, have been enough to have satisfied an infidel. Besides, according to this, there are innumerable objections to the bible. Let me just mention one or two to help you out.

We are no where told what kind of a well Jacob's was, whether a common spring or a draw well; whether it was surrounded with brick or stone, or whether it had any wall round it at all; nor any intimation, if surrounded, whereabouts the entrance was, whether north or south; or whether they had steps to go up, or steps to go down to the water.---In the account of the wounded traveller, Luke x. what deficiencies? not one word is said of the host, whether a Jew or a Gentile, a tall man or a short. Nor of the house, whether built of stone or timber; whether it had windows or wanted them; and what a help to fix the æra of glass-making, had we been only informed whether they were glazed or not? but not one word is said of these things, nay, nor even of the sign, whether the King's Head, or the Shears and Bodkin.

You add, "Had it been Moses," &c. same page, who had returned "not an unconverted Jew had remained," &c. Hold, Sir, your sense runs too fast for

your reason, and your supposition, for matters of fact. *And there appeared, once upon a time, Moses and Elias, say eye witnesses, but who were converted by it? And what effect upon unbelievers and infidels, had the restoration of the widow's son from death, though done before multitudes? Or the resurrection of Lazarus, in open day? It is well known the latter raised the jealousies of the scribes, &c. and roused their malice into action against the gracious author, who has well observed, in his word, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

With regard to the resurrection, you do not deny, nor attempt to deny it, only you say, p. 74, "The writers, whoever they were, disagree so much, as to make it evident that none of them were there." Well, but that is no proof against it. The few detached parts, a word here, and a sentence there, you have picked out, prove nothing against the account, but taken as they stand, and all circumstances considered, they most clearly establish the truths recorded; and every way, by a variety of incontrovertible evidences and things, support, and confirm the divine mission of these men, and the important matters they relate.

The expression used by St Matthew, "*Until this day,*" p. 76, which you make as an argument to prove that he did not write the book that bears his name, shews your inattention. It should be remembered, that St Matthew is supposed to have written his gospel about Anno 39, six years after these matters happened. It might well surprise the man of God, that such a barefaced falsehood, amidst so many witnesses to the contrary, should have so long prevailed among this deluded people, and extorted the sentence with wonder, "*Until this day!*"

"The absurdity also of the story is worth noticing," you say, p. 76, that is, the story which was propagated to invalidate the truth of our Lord's resurrection, Matt. xxviii. 11, 12, &c. I join issue with you here, only you will remember that St Matthew does not say the

soldiers described the "manner and persons" in particular, but suited their story to their subject; and as to the "absurdity" of it, forget not, that it is part of deism, and all the consequent honours of it, deists are welcome to.

"I come now," say you, p. 76, "to that part of the evidence in those books, that respects the pretended appearance of Christ after his pretended resurrection." Here you drive fast through the four Evangelists, and move a little quicker than you will allow our Redeemer to have done, if seven miles and a half took him up a whole day to walk, p. 78. Here I shall follow you a little closer, and examine more minutely than the last, the evidence you bring to invalidate this part of the sacred history, because on proving or overturning this, great things depend.

I see nothing impracticable, taking it in the strictest sense, in our Lord meeting his apostles on the day he rose, at a mountain of Galilee, Matt. ch. xxviii. 7. 10. 16. 17. seeing some parts of that province were not far from Jerusalem, according to some; and his attending two of the disciples in their journey to Emmaus, which Mark takes notice of, chap. xvi. 12; and Luke relates more fully, chap. xxiv. 15, &c. In the mean time his apostles might return, and Jesus give them the meeting at Jerusalem in the evening, after leaving the disciples at Emmaus, John, chap. xx. 19; there was time enough without taking in the speed of spirits to the account; for after he had retired, the two disciples resolving to return, set off and reached in time the well-known house of resort, perhaps the place where our Redeemer had eaten the passover with them before his death; reciprocally to give and share information and joy on the solemnly pleasing occasion of their Lord's being restored to life; where, while they were relating their late adventure to the eleven, Jesus entered the room, Luke xxiv. 33, 36, 37, &c.

Thus, I humbly conceive, all those difficulties and contradictions, p. 76, 77, &c. are vanished quite, and the gospels still honourably hold their place, and the

most essential truths are established on the most permanent foundation. So that the contradictions, &c. with which the Evangelists are charged, and for which they are so illiberally treated by you, Sir, are not to be found with them, but only where they ever have been, in the ideas of bad men, and in bad books.

You say, p. 78, "As to the account of Christ being seen by more than five hundred at once, it is only Paul who says it, and not the five hundred," &c. We admit that he said it, and what a challenge was this to all the world of enemies? but we want proof that the five hundred did not say it. If they had not, and could prove the apostle was wrong, as the most of them, alluded to, were then living, why did they not do it? But this is a very unfair way of arguing---but what are we to expect? any thing to help out a bad cause, and to invalidate evidence deadly to deism.

"I come now," you add page 79, "to the last scene, that of the ascension into heaven, which, if true, was to seal the whole, and ought to have been as public as the crucifixion," &c. The proofs of the ascension as to the time, place, and manner, were not so essential as those of the crucifixion and resurrection; nor could they be so clear, because in the one, man was the chief agent, and in the other, the Redeemer's presence, some where or other, to some one or other, in the house, mountain, &c. were so many strengthening evidences of the resurrection, which in this were all wanting. But,

1. There are witnesses sufficient to prove it to the satisfaction of reasonable men; the testimony of those who had been present, and both saw and heard, Mark xvi. 14---19.

2. It proved itself by the consequent promises being fulfilled; the gift of tongues; the help afforded the apostles to accomplish wonders in working miracles, and humanizing men. These are such self-evident facts, with incontrovertible proofs down to our own day, that I should really think myself as well employed in proving Mr Paine's *Age of Reason* to be a printed book, or that the sun is in the firmament, as to spend time in proving

the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ; seeing there is besides, the testimony of angels to confirm it. Acts c. i. 1 to 14.

Page 80 you say " I have now gone through the examination of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John," believing it " impossible to find in any story (alluding to the resurrection) upon record, so many, and such glaring absurdities, contradictions, and falsehoods, as are in those books ;" and seem convinced " that the bible and testament are imposition upon the world ;---that the fall of man, the account of Jesus Christ being the son of God, and of his dying to appease the wrath of God, and of salvation by that strange means, are all fabulous inventions, dishonourable to the wisdom and power of the Almighty ;---that the only true religion is deism, the belief of one God, and an imitation of his moral character, upon this I rested all my hopes of happiness hereafter. So I say now---and so help me God."

The " contradictions," &c. Mr P. speaks of, arise solely from his misunderstanding of, and misapplying what is written, as we have already seen, when the books are suffered to speak for themselves, and of course, can only increase with the strength of prejudice against facts, and hatred of the plainest truths.

As to the " bible," &c. being an imposition ; when man wanted help and could not procure it, it was an excusable obtrusion to force a kindness upon him he did not merit, and could not expect. It is surely a bearable badge of bondage to be laid under the pressure of an obligation for which we had nothing to give, and without which we must have lived in darkness, and died in doubt.

As to " the fall of man," being " fabulous," we have only to recur to your account of the prophets and Evangelists to prove that disagreeable truth ; for it is impossible to admit of the goodness, wisdom, and purity of God, and at the same time allow that these murderous, lying, impudent, silly characters are the perfect work of his holy hands. You are again caught in your own net. You must either admit of the fall, or give up the wis-

dom of God ; either deny the badness of Moses, &c. and the Evangelists, or retract what you have said—which you please.

If the fall be proveable, the recovery is an absolute consequent ; and what could satisfy infinite justice, but an infinite sacrifice ? and where shall that be found but in the Infinite ? and how should it be brought about but by the Infinite becoming, as far as could be, finite to accomplish it ? Here again we salute the virgin's Son ; the Wonderful, Counsellor ; the mighty, or strong God ; the Babe born in Bethlehem ; who, and accomplishing which, instead of being "dishonourable to," is the very "wisdom and power of the Almighty," and will, of all his works, reflect the greatest glory on Him to all eternity.

"True religion is deism." Pray, Sir, where would you have been informed of the principles, worthy notice, of deism, without the bible ? Where can you learn the being, virtues, pleasure and will of God, so fully as there ? I really wish to know, for wherever it is, I am conscious, if to any clearness, it will coincide, not clash, with that precious book. But you appear something like those let into a secret, who when well acquainted with all its parts, despise the instructor, and ridicule the instructions.

You rest "all your hopes of happiness hereafter on the belief of one God, and practice of moral virtues." I presume, not, Sir, to force my creed upon you, but, I do confess, I durst not venture my happiness hereafter on so apparently sandy a foundation. I take not upon me to call in question your morals ; but, Sir, if they are to be judged of from your writings, and the treatment you offer Moses, the other Prophets, Jesus Christ and his Apostles, the decision, I expect, will be very little in your favour. How well you imitate the moral virtues of God there, needs no great degree of penetration to discover. Indeed, Sir, I am shocked to hear a man talk of his imitation of God's moral character, who has gone such lengths in degrading by the most infamous means, his fellow creatures, if the bible was but common history, and broken almost every tie that binds society.

If, Sir, your writings are a transcript of your mind, how unhappy must your state be? and in this condition your passions wrought up to the utmost degree of uncertain phrensy, in the dreadful dilemma to quiet the clamours of your uneasy conscience, you adopt the last great decisive of an unhappy apostate, whom you yourself in another place censure on the same account, and awfully swear to all! p. 80. I hesitate not a moment, Sir, to tell you, you are every way deceived. Your trust will come to nothing. *The hypocrite's hope shall perish; whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.* Your next refuge must be Atheism, the last resource of erring minds. But would you, Sir, escape; and indeed imitate God's "moral virtues," hasten to learn how of the despised Nazarene, and of those who thought it their greatest glory to make him the subject of their predictions, and the object of their love, adoration, and obedience, the prophets and apostles.

"But to return to the subject," say you, page 80, What subject? Why, the gospels. Well, but you said you had gone "through the examination," &c. If you chuse to run backward and forward, I shall not follow you, nor need I, for the most material things you have advanced for two or three pages, I have considered; only it seems strange that you will have the four evangelists to be resolved on lying, and yet not allow them sense to consult how to lie to the best advantage. I see you sometimes discover the snare before you are caught in it.

Page 83, you say, "Those who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history may suppose, that the book called the N. Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ." The truth, doctrines, and writings that compose it, have been ever since, or soon after, but they were not collected and put into such order, as we find them, till some years after. The first thing the apostles did after the day of Pentecost, according to divine appointment, was to go and preach every where, to gather a church and people together. When this was done, to edify the society, and to inform rising posterity, and to have a guide and standard in doctrine, ordinances,

and discipline, to ministers and people in time to come, the evangelists, it is believed, were desired to write an account of those things they themselves were eye-witnesses of concerning Jesus Christ, &c. which they did, in different parts and at different times, the account of each writer bearing his own name, not 300 years or more, as you say in this page, which I shall more fully consider by and by, but it is supposed St Matthew's was written about six years after our Lord's ascension---St Mark's about eleven---St Luke's twenty-two---and St John's about sixty-four years after that time.

"Disputes ran high," you say, page 84, "among the people then" about the year 350, "calling themselves Christians." What then? So they *now* do, both "as to points of doctrine," and "the authenticity of the" gospels; and so they still will, while there are men living whose faith and practice are opposed by those books. As to "the contest between the persons called St Augustine and Fauste about the year 400" page 84. What is that to the purpose? What have you to do with them? Neither of their names is in the bible; you have promised to keep to that book over and over, and to confute itself, *only* with itself. But pray who is *Fauste*? An opposer of the truth.

No wonder such a man called those books "tales, forgeries, and lies," p. 85, seeing they so much clashed with his views. These are the *best*, the *only* arguments and proofs, bible-haters have, against that sacred volume.

As to your evidence against the bible from *Boulanger*, page 86, in his life of St Paul, they are also contrary to your promises, you have again and again declared, as I have shewn, you would use no other proof against, but what you found in, the bible. "I will not go out of the bible for proof," &c. say you, p. 18. But who is this *Boulanger*? And what the proof he brings? an enemy to the bible.

Who are his evidences? The rankest of heretics; the Marcionists, the followers of *Marcion*, who lived in the beginning of the second century; who being excommu-

nicated by his own father for his wickedness, took umbrage at the strictness of gospel discipline, and the faithfulness of the orthodox, and set up for himself. He denied the real birth, incarnation, and passion of Jesus Christ, and held them to be apparent only. He denied the resurrection of the body, rejected the law and the prophets, but admitted the gospel of St Luke, excepting the two first chapters; and likewise the epistles of St Paul, with some alterations.

"The Manichians, who formed," says your friend, "a very numerous sect at the commencement of Christianity." Their tenets were something similar to the Marcionists.

"The Ebionists, or Nazarenes, who were the first Christians, rejected all the epistles of St Paul," &c. But your companion forgot to tell us they received the gospel of St Matthew, though in other respects very erroneous, denying the divinity of Jesus Christ, &c. How true did Mr Paine speak when he said, page 18, "False testimony is good against itself?" How do these prove, 1. The authenticity and antiquity of the New Testament as we have it, and in that the truth of the Old?

2. How do these contradict Mr Paine in asserting, page 83, "There was no such book as the New Testament till more than 300 years after Christ?" Such evidence from enemies is very valid, and the most incontrovertible. These as much prove the existence of the New Testament with its doctrines, &c. in those ages, as Mr Paine's *Age of Reason*, proves the bible existing in our day.

The scorn and contempt you again express to Moses and Jesus Christ, to the old and new part of the bible, page 87, &c. I pass over, being but a repetition of your usual bitter invectives against truth and its authors, and come to "The Epistles of Paul," page 89.

You appear rather inclined to favour them, but "The character of Paul," say you, "has in it a great deal of violence and fanaticism," &c. page 90. Are you sure of that? Perhaps some would have substituted the

word *zeal* for "violence;" and for the word "fanaticism."---What is fanaticism? It is a scare-crow, dressed up by priests, to frighten mankind from the field of the gospel, and which deists use against the truth. It is the cant-word of the day, and means generally from the mouth of a priest, or the pen of an infidel, what the word *leveller* on certain occasions means. It is a stop-gap, a great help in a lame argument; it frequently rounds off a period, both from the pulpit and press, with neither sense nor reason in it, to the astonishment of multitudes. But, fanaticism, and if Mr Paine does not know it, "it is civility," returning the compliment, "to inform" him, is, 1. To look for an end without a mean. 2. Joying in an uncertain good. 'Thou which nothing can be more contrary to the bible, to Paul and to his friends.

Your arguments on St Paul's reasoning on the resurrection, page 90, &c. are grossness in the lump.

I do not wonder at the bible resurrection appearing so "gloomy" to you, 1. Because your hopes of happiness, though ratified by oath, page 80, are cut off by that book. 2. Because your premises are so absurd, and your conclusions so heavy; and from these rise those mean ideas, preferring the enjoyment of a "snail" to that of an immortal mind, capable of pleasure arising from communion and intercourse with God; or even the gaudy wings of a "butterfly," to a pure spirit, swifter than lightning, and brighter than the sun.

"Sometimes Paul affects," you say, page 92 "to be a naturalist, and to prove his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation. "*Thou fool,*" says he, "*That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.*" "To which," you subjoin, "one might reply in his own language, *Thou fool, Paul, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die not.*" I apprehend he has, however, the best of the argument of you here also. Grain *does* die. What is death? A transmutation, a changing from one state to another; just so in this vegetable death; the grain *must* die, transmute, change, or it will never produce its kind. Death is not cor-

ruption; it is, generally speaking, corruption's predecessor, or parent. The germ, or substance of the grain rises from the shell or husk, like the soul at death from the body, bearing pure, living, proper grain, as will the immortal body rise at last from death. But, say you, page 94, "The grain that dies in the ground never does nor can vegetate." You should have said, *rots*, or *perishes*, in the ground, &c. And you add, "The living grains only produce the next crop." The living grains, properly, *are* the next crop.

But you endeavour to help the apostle next paragraph, saying, "The progress of an animal, from one state of being to another, as from a worm to a butterfly, applies to the case," &c. Is it so, Sir? Does not a worm imply matter in motion, or an animated being? What difference there is between that and scattered, quiescent dust, needs no great sagacity to tell. Had you, with submission, said, The progress of an animal, as from a dormant chrysalis to a butterfly applies to the case, you would have spoken nearer the truth, and less like what you call the apostle.

Here I shall take notice of a note of yours concerning Paul, page 86, and though it is contrary to your promises, yet I shall indulge you in this also, and at the same time make my own use of it. "The Ebionists, or Nazarenes, who were the first Christians, rejected all the epistles of Paul, and regarded him as an impostor; was originally a pagan; that he came to Jerusalem, where he lived sometime; and that having a mind to marry the daughter of the high-priest, he caused himself to be circumcised; but that not being able to obtain her, he quarrelled with the Jews, and wrote against circumcision, against the observation of the sabbath, and against all the legal ordinances." The use I make is,

1. If the *first* Christians, whether right or wrong is another matter, rejected the epistles of St Paul, it is plain to a demonstration they must have been written then.

2. Allowing him to have been a pagan, your friend says, he wrote against the Jewish ceremonies.

3. He was at Jerusalem whilst a Jewish high-priest was there to get his daughter, which could not be after the temple was destroyed, and that was about forty years after our Lord's ascension.

Now Sir, from this testimony you must,

1. Either shew us other writings of St Paul, with equal proofs, against the Mosaic ceremonies, besides what we have, or you must admit of them. And if you admit of them you must admit of the doctrines of the gospel, yea, the truth of the Old and New Testaments, Heb. i. 1. & ii, 3, 4.

2. You must either discard your auxiliary and his testimony, or admit of the antiquity and truth of the New Testament, as stated in itself and by its friends, whichever you think proper.

"I here," say you, page 95, "close the subject on the Old Testaments and the New. The evidence I have produced, to prove them forgeries is extracted from the books themselves." Only part so, however. "And acts like a two-edged sword," &c. That is true, but it turns out, unhappily for you, to the destroying your endeavours to overturn the bible, and more abundantly to clear up and confirm, I appeal to matters of fact, the whole truth of that most blessed book.

If in the past part you have hewn and cut down the bible, here, and to the end you seem greatly afraid of its coming to life again, and being troublesome, for you fall upon it like a fresh man, but with old weapons.

"The contradictory impossibilities," say you, p. 95, "contained in the Old Testament and New, put them in the case of a man who swears *for* and *against*." And such a one I believe we need not go far to find. I have to observe your apparent contradictions have been met and solved.

Must it not add weight, and validity to scripture testimony, that, though written at such a distance of time, when language was cramped, and science imperfect; by various persons, in different periods and ages of the world, it can be proved after all Mr Paine says, to have less real contradiction in it, than the *Age of Reason*, is-

cently and on purpose written to discover the absurdities in that book?

1. Mr Paine complains of repetition, page 33, and finds fault for want of it, page 70.

2. He promises over and over, page 6, 10, 18, not to go out of the bible for proof against it, and yet at p. 27, calls in to his help *Alenezra* and *Spinisa*; at page 85, *Boulanger*; and heaps upon heaps p. 86.

3. With regard to the Psalms, p. 40, he says, "The greater part relates to local circumstances." In the same page he says, "The authors of the bible paid no regard to time, place, and circumstances."

4. He exclaims, p. 64, "I have gone through the bible as a man through a wood, and fell trees. Here they lie." Now who would imagine that *eleven* out of four-and-twenty never had received a blow? Nay, but concerning whom he declares he would not "disturb" them.

5. He says, p. 82, "There was no such book as the New Testament till more than 300 years after Christ." And page 86, he expressly tells us that "at the commencement of Christianity, the New Testament was rejected as false."

I pass over many more such contradictions open as day, nor shall I push my advantage of this here, but simply ask, which is most worthy of credit, the Old and New Testament, or the *Age of Reason*?

In the conclusion, page 97, Mr Paine says, "The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries, that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing called revelation, or revealed religion." That is the bible. "It has been the most dishonourable belief against the character of the Divinity, the most destructive to morality, and the peace and happiness of man, that ever was propagated since man began to exist." &c. These are heavy charges, but it must give pleasure to every lover of the bible to find that they are only charges, and that the bitterest of its enemies can go no further. The most prominent of this gentleman's former objections have been already considered, and we shall now attend to these a little.

Was the bible a book newly made, or lately imported, and offered us as a rule for our faith and manners ; or was it kept up as the Sibylline oracles of old, only to be looked at on certain occasions, or even as it once was, prohibited by popish priests, and the people forbidden to read it ; Mr Paine's exaggerated account might pass as true, and himself be considered as great a friend to his fellow-creatures for his timely information of the dangers consequent on receiving that Book, as we now cannot but consider him an enemy both to God and man. It is impossible to read his account without wondering that there can be a man so lost to himself in fear or self-love, who dares to represent a book in such a manner, which treats so much of the Being, Power, Justice, Wisdom, Works and Goodness of God, even if he could not receive all its doctrines. But to this gentleman, the judgments of God upon his enemies, are subjects of his daring murders, and impious complaints ; and the gracious acts of his kindness, are matters of satire and ridicule, and are lost in the sink of a mind apparently dead to gratitude and all the finer feelings.

How are we affected, for instance, when alive to the sweet emotions of sympathy, when we read of the fidelity of a *Pythias* to preserve his friend, or a *Curtius* to save his country ; or, to come to things of a more recent date, of that illustrious Frenchman *Eustace de St Pierre*, with his companions of immortal memory, who to save their fellow citizens, hastened to put on the garb of guilt, and the rope of criminality, and fled to meet death at the feet of the invader of their country, I say how are we struck on reading these, and such like accounts, when in the possession of sensations that do honour to human nature, and, though nowise interested, how readily do we offer our tribute of applause to such generous characters ! Yet, what are these, or ten thousand times more, to what the bible tells us God has done for man ? When we read of the indignities man has offered God, and at the same time of his obligations to him, one would be ready to think that an enmity would have taken place, which nothing could irradicate. But

instead of that, to the astonishment of heaven and earth; HE contrives and effects their deliverance; kindly, keeping alive the memory of his mercy in mercies, means and men, till the glorious appearance of the Messiah the Virgin's Son, yes, Sir, the Virgin's Son, the Serpent-bruise. We again joy to hail THEE, O DESIRE OF NATIONS! and delight to own Thee in each shape and name. But, lost in the amazing magnitude of thy love and sufferings, how shall we express the debt we owe Thee!

"The bible teaches us rapine, cruelty, and murders." Gracious heaven, where are we! was ever a man so lost to decency, sense and reason! Was ever a man so much at variance with himself, with God, or man, as this? Had you said the bible is full of indignity, sorrow, and grief to God on account of man, it had been nearer the truth. If nations or individuals suffered, it was for their rebellion, and in righteousness towards God and others; but, as if determined to exceed depravity, and outdo in offering an insult to heaven, these you commiserate, and the sorrows of innocence you deride. The illustrious Deliver of mankind, is the object of your banter, scorn and contempt. Sir, I am implicated, and my species, in the insults you have offered the Son of Mary, the Son of God. What shall be done?---HE hath set us an example, He bears with and spares you, nor will we, though we must oppose you, cease, amidst your unprovoked revilings, to pray for and pity you.

The bible is the "origin of the most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties---destructive to morality, and the peace and happiness of man." O monstrous perversion of reason and truth! You here impeach my judgment, and that of the bulk of Europe for ages. You insinuate here, that in believing and approving of the bible, I am an abettor, with all such, of those dreadful evils, and an enemy to God and man. I have examined your evidences, but find them weak, contradictory, and false, every way unworthy receiving by any who has the smallest grain of sense to risk. Now having done with evidence, you fall to declaiming. But, Sir, though I

confess you are an adept in this art; yet, as scorn and derision are no great marks of genius, and are generally the last auxiliaries called out to help in a bad cause; and as banter can bring no conviction to a candid enquirer, your efforts I trust will prove abortive here also. But you say "the bible of creation is inexhaustible in texts," page 106. If we look at the bible itself, and compare it with matters of fact we see and know, it will appear quite a different book from what you represent it, and full of the clearest texts.

Where are sufficient rules for society made plain?
Among the *stars*?

Where is mercy to an enemy discoverable in precept and practice? Among the *trees*?

Where are the most useful things to man unfolded?
In the *water*?

Where discover our soul's excellency and worth?
Among the *fowls* of *heaven*, or the *fishes* of the *sea*?

Where learn our duty to our Maker? Among the
clouds of the *valley*?

Where look for instructions to set us right if wrong?
Among the *shrubs* of the *forest*, or in the *grass* of the
field?

Where find a stimulus to virtue? In the *beauties* of
the *tulip*, or in the *scent* of the *rose*?

These are the leaves of Mr Paine's bible, but we want a teacher. If he can himself read here, he should be civil to those who cannot; and if he will not read in our bible now, let him not destroy it, for I dare divine, it was at least his horn-book at first, and that it was there he began his "a b, ab," in the alphabet of creation; if it was not by this he rose, if risen he is, to utter the wonderous sounds of "hic, hæc, hoc," in this complex language, where there are so many letters with four feet.

Less tedious, more certain, and more pleasant is the bible, though to many full of mysteries; but the cause may be in themselves. It is well known that all men have not equal powers or abilities; many have not capacities sufficient to take in enough of the mysteries of

a common handicraft business, to get bread and clothing by. Thousands are lost in the depths of philosophy, and lost to society, who, had they known how to have carried themselves, might have been useful members of the community. But in the profundity of revelation, in its brightness, beauties, usefulness, connection, and fullness; in its author, doctrines, duties, and privileges, thousands and myriads are bewildered, from the false ideas they form, and wrong principles they set out upon. They think all God's reasons of conduct should be known, and bear an analogy with their own; and that the great Author of nature should be every way as explicable in his being, attributes, word, and ways, as if he was their menial servant. The contents of the bible must be as intelligible to their capacities, however imperfect, as a common problem in Euclid is to a learned mathematician. They must fathom its divine depths by the superficial line of their circumscribed capacities, or they flout; they spurn, they scoff, they rail---become deists, laugh at all revelation, and lampoon and deride all who have less confidence of their own parts, and more confidence in God. It is possible, I own, by declamation only, to puzzle the most self-evident axiom in philosophy, mathematics, or divinity; by this, the plainest truths may appear clouded, as the fairest character may lie under strong suspicion by malicious reports, or base inuendoes. But if Mr Paine thinks that his sarcasms and ridicule are sufficient to overturn truth with thinking men, he will find himself mistaken. They may do with those who wish, and whose interest it is, that the bible may be false; but his artillery is too light, and too ill served to demolish the good man's fortress, destroy the believer's citadel, or overthrow the bulwark and outposts of the Deity. For, firm as their great Author, the scriptures have stood, not only the shock of time uninjured, but the united attacks of devils and bad men in every age, without harm. Precious truths! peculiar is your situation; Satan and Deists would not have you *believed*; Papists would not have you *read*; and many Protestant priests would not have

'you experienced, and are as great enemies to your power, as either of the others is to your forms and contents. But its divine author says, "*It shall accomplish that which I please.*"

Man's curiosity and benefit naturally lead him to enquire after things past, present and to come. God, condescending to indulge him, has given him in the bible the best account and most agreeable to his situation and nature. God there unfolds to man his own existence, and hence, *that he is*, is an object of my faith, not *how* he is. Just so all the mysteries of the Trinity, in all the persons, offices, and characters; together with every thing we cannot see, or our senses perceive, but which are made known to us for our instruction, help, and comfort, and which will prove so, if our pride and unbelief do not hinder; to which we should the more readily accede, since the descriptions in the bible are so consistent to every thing in nature we have any acquaintance with. The things passing among us with which we are daily conversant, are the accounts of the bible substantiated, as far as the parts we live in can bear a semblance. Were we in the east, our eyes would more fully see, our ears hear, and our hands handle, the truth of the scriptures. The fragments of Babylon, &c. and the desolations in Palestine—yea the archives of an enemy to the Christian faith would overturn all Mr P.'s arguments against, and unite in support of bible history.

Our very passions and appetites, bear witness to the truth of the sacred records; so that if we had no bible, if we formed ideas consistent with our state, we should just think as we now do. Such congruity and harmony are there in the works, word, and ways of God, above us, so far as we know; beneath and around us, so far as we can discover; and within us, so far as we feel. These things are a transcript of the bible, which that book kindly helps us to understand. So that in fact, a man must deny his senses, and do extreme violence to the powers of his body and mind, before he can give up the bible.

Thus, whilst this blessed book informs us of a God, his attributes, &c. it discovers to us how to please him and be happy. Mr Paine says it is "destructive to the peace and happiness of man;" and fair stand the maxims of a heathen, for the well-being of society, in comparison of the bible. See p. 99, Note. Let us examine.

Consider we man as a member of the community, as an accountable, immortal creature, where shall he find directions so suitable to him as in the bible? View him as a citizen in the capacity of a magistrate. What instructions! Exod. xxii. chap. Deut. i. 17, xvii. 14, &c. and xxiv. 17. In short, That justice might be every way administered, every man's rights enjoyed, the afflicted find comfort and the necessitous relief, seem to be the great end of the sacred code. Even how the poorest may sleep in safety and ease, engages the attention of God himself, Exod. xxii. 22, 27. Hear further his concern expressed, *He kept him, his people as one, as the apple of his eye.* What are the maxims of Solon's system in *theory*, when compared to those of the bible's in *practice*? God resented the indignities offered his people, from even the grandees of the earth, *He reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.* These, Sir, were doing ten hundred years before Solon spake, and recorded near to five hundred years before he existed; and towards persons too, some of whom you even prefer the company of devils to, page 97. Perhaps it may not always be the case. But further, *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye. The very hairs of your head are all numbered.* These are the "maxims" of a book Mr Paine calls "horrid," "detestable," "impious," "shocking," "destructive to morality, and the peace and happiness of man." It may be so, but it can only be such a one as Mr Paine.

Consider we man still in a judicial capacity. Are coercive measures necessary, and must some suffer to deter others? If you follow the bible you mix mercy with judgment, and forty stripes at most shall bound the pu-

nishment, Deut. xxv. 3. What are these to the hundreds, with ninefold vengeance, inflicted on delinquents in some states ?

Does justice demand the life ? Life for life, &c. but without adding indignity and carrying resentment beyond death, Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

How congenial are the maxims of the bible to man in an inferior station ? *Be subject to the higher powers*, &c. Rule and order there must be, and every member is bound to keep and help them forward. Look at him as a father, master, husband, their opposites and concomitants ; what counsel is needed that is not given ? As a neighbour, what clear information how to proceed with friend or enemy ? What a guide is the bible in things *civil, social, and religious* ? To a man's *end* and *hopes*, if worthy a human breast, and the dignity of man ? How clear, explicit, plain, and encouraging, from God's justice being satisfied in Jesus Christ, and grace and mercy procured for all who want, and all who come, allowing things to be as stated in the scriptures ? and we have as good a right to believe this side of the question as the other, and of two difficulties, one of which we are under the necessity of adopting, it is an allowed maxim we ought to chuse the least. If there is a God, we can run no risk in following the bible, because we embrace it as his word from conviction, it being the most congenial to our views of Him in perfection of excellency, benignity, truth and righteousness, as discovered in his works, and felt in our own bosoms in the happiest moments of retirement, and serious devotion. — And if there is no God, there will be, of course, no danger in attending to it ; and deriving all the comfort we can get, in this chequered state, from its pleasing doctrines, and cheering prospects, to all its willing votaries, here and hereafter ; which rise far too high above, to be the productions of the human mind unassisted by heaven, and could only originate with God himself.

Under these impressions, and with such comfortable sensations, faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, may joy-

fully enter their pulpits, and freely, and boldly publish to accountable, immortal man, the sacred records, and all the precious truths contained in the bible ; and under the Divine Auspices, be as instrumental in doing good, winning souls, and building up the church of God now, as holy men in times past have been, in humanizing mankind, and saving souls from death ;---- amidst opposition, both from men and devils.

I am astonished at your intimating, page 97, " That Christianity was established by the sword ;" and that you should draw such uncharitable inferences concerning the whole, from the indiscreet forwardness of one of the body. And I wonder, Sir, you do not see that the exerted power of Jesus in instantly healing the wound of an enemy, must more than compensate for the hasty act of a servant, jealous for the safety of a much loved, injured, and insulted Master. But, you add, page 98, " It is then false to say, that Christianity was not established by the sword." Indeed, Sir, it is far more to say it was. You must forget of what you are speaking, and to whom you are alluding. Had it been the compilation of the state maxims of a tyrant, or a system of mere human polity, such a measure as you speak of would have been necessary, and most effectual to the enforcing of the belief and observance of the same. But what human aid did HE stand in need of to enforce his will, to whom *all power in heaven and in earth* inherently belonged ? Jesus gives you to understand, if you would but read and believe, had opposition been his design, or earthly glory and dignity his view, what resources he had in his own hands, mean as he appeared, to accomplish such purposes. *My kingdom is not, says he, of this world, &c.* and that *more than twelve legions of angels*, he tells us, Matth. xxvi. 53, were ever ready at his call. If you would know what he singly could accomplish, see him with his little whip of cords, *terrible as an army with banners*, driving multitudes from their stations, with their tables and their treasures, where they were driving a trade, the gain of which, we may

suppose, was dear to them as their lives. Behold him also, dispossessing legions at a word, one of whom, if but commissioned, could have slain scores of thousands in a night.

Again, Sir, learn the power of him against whom you contend, in his striking to the ground the hordes that came out to seize him, with the single, soul-stunning, I AM HE! *Kiss then, Sir, the Son lest he be angry and you perish, when his wrath is kindled but a little.*

But further, How often did Christ shew and express himself diametrically opposite to such measures; and, excepting once, I think, all his lifetime, against the use of such weapons? And what he said to his forward servant, *Peter*, on the above occasion, clearly evinces that, and should serve as a warning to all who handle that instrument, how they use it. *Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword.* Poor encouragement this at the off-set, for those, who, according to you, were to fight their way through the world; and who, instead of warm arguments, were about to use cold iron to enforce their doctrines, and to establish their principles. But, no, Sir, Jesus came not to take away, but to give, life, both spiritual and eternal; and in recommending even these, to deal with men as free agents; and if any have used harsher means for that purpose, they have as far missed their way as you have the truth, in declaring the above.

You ask, p. 98, "What is it that we have learned from this pretended thing called revealed religion?" I answer, every thing that can do honour to, and embellish human nature in every character. In this, by the aid of the same spirit which assisted the writers, and which is equally needed now, as at first, to understand the same, men clearly learn their duty to God; the great end of their creation, and of all the creatures about them. This is a comment upon God, upon his works, and upon man to man; expressive of his duty,

interest and happiness. It is here man contemplates God, and learns man. This is the mirror that reflects or shews God in all his excellencies, and the creatures in all their uses. It was from this the latent principles of man were first stirred into action, and have been ever since unfolding and expanding themselves. By this men learned to form society, frame laws, found arts and sciences, the fittest for man, and the most consistent with his state, and beneficial to his existence; and the most congenial to all the ideas, and active, and extensive powers of his immortal mind. It is a directory to every thing great and useful; a guide to virtue, and a stimulus to all good.

Your talk, Sir, about the " bible of creation" separate from this, is a perfect burlesque upon mankind. It is like giving a Hebrew bible, or a Greek Testament to an infant to read a chapter in, who knows neither the figure of letters nor the sense of sounds. Take the bible away, and I know no situation in life so dreary as that of the Christians; no science in the world so defective as that of divinity. For traversing seas and exploring deserts, heaven has sent the friendly loadstone. It would be little encouragement for the bewildered traveller, without his maps and compass, to bid him look at the fields and firmament; or small satisfaction to the mariner, far from land, with neither chart nor compass, to tell him he was safe, if he would only look at the sea and skies; adding, Here are the beauties of creation; here are the wonders of the Lord. Both true, but ill-timed; they have an end to accomplish, which talking so helps them little in. They have a great charge, and their all is at stake; and should they look till their eyes became fixt as the orbs they gazed at, they would be no nearer effecting their purpose. It would prove like the painful task, the precious book so pointedly speaks of, in its usual strain of beautiful figure, when detailing the fruitless labour of inconsiderate man, under the judicial punishment of heaven for his indifference and sin; Isaiah, chap, xxix. 11, 12. If men had

not a better guide to heaven than the book of nature, they might gaze upon the beauties of creation, and stare at the stars till they dropped into hell. Theology, the most important science, would, without the bible, become the most uncertain in the world. Yea, take the bible away, and you offer an insult to all science, as much so, as to language, in destroying the alphabet of every tongue. It is there we find in embryo, in miniature, the most noble and useful sciences, in the whole world. What! when arts, in all their perfections are flourishing on every hand, must religion be stripped of its only help---its all, the bible? Take away the bible, and you leave men without a check upon their passions and appetites. Take away the bible, and you lay the enclosure of society open without a fence, without an hedge. Take away the bible, and you leave the world without a sun; all would become darkness and uncertainty. He then of all enemies is the greatest to the present race, but above all to coming generations of men, who strives to wrest the bible from our hands.

To sum up all, what is it we learn from all that has been said?

1. What we set off with, viz. that "Thomas Paine understands not" the bible.
2. That he is as liable to make blunders and mistakes, as those whose blunders he hunts after in the bible.
3. That he can lampoon, and that if he has any merit, it is in the art of false colouring, and deceptive ridicule; in these he appears perfectly skilful; perverting the truth, and prostituting good parts in a bad cause.
4. We learn that as times, states, and circumstances changed, succeeding generations needed the same help to know and please God by revelation, as others.
5. That God, ever mindful of his creatures, raised up men as guides to virtue and happiness in succession, equally qualified to help forward his work, and each in his day added, as heaven pleased, his stone to the spiritual fabric, in writing and compiling the bible, till it arrived at the perfection in which we find it.
6. That the aid of the same spirit is still

necessary for to help us to understand and practise the bible, that at first indited, and helped holy men to write, and has since assisted past ages to attend to it.

But some may say, we ought to be careful what interpolations we admit of in the bible, lest we come not to know what is really original. True; but remember, 1. *All* are originals to us. 2. Holy and inspired men such as *Joshua, Samual, Ezra, &c.* are considered as the compilers of the bible. 3. That with all these emendations for connecting and accommodating different things and times, the bible was thus when our Lord so often quoted and recommended it. 4. When the Apostles wrote, and transcribed so much of, and so frequently alluded to it.

Let us then, 1. Read and take delight in the bible. 2. Live it so far as we know, and pray for the accomplishment of it in ourselves, and in the world. 3. Consider what it has been and still is, a friend, a light, a guide; sure, clear, and faithful. What situation are those nations in, that are deprived of the free use of the bible? Bordering on a state of barbarism.

What were our own forefathers, when, under the despotic dominion of Monks, this book was suppressed? Degraded to almost a level with the beast, both in mind and circumstances. What opened their eyes to see as men, and to claim and regain their invaded rights, both in a civil and religious sense? The "book of Nature"? ---Deism? ---No! The BIBLE --That Book of books. Say *Britain*, what has raised thee to hold the predominance in the scale of empires, and exalted thy sons to the highest station in polished society? The neglect and contempt, or the study of, and attention to the bible and its sacred maxims? -----To the honour of this blessed book, the nation, the parish, the family---the individual, is the most accomplished, the wisest, and the happiest of any, in erudition, science, and society, in all their branches, where the bible is best known, and most attended to. 4. Consider how its predictions have been accomplished? Say, ye monarchies, ye nations---ye

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Jews, especially, ye chosen of God, to chronicle to men in aftertimes, His ways on earth! 5. How have these times been spoken of? It is in that book we are forewarned of these men and their errors. *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, and doctrines of devils, 1 Timothy iv. 1. Who shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 2. Pet. ii. 1, 2. Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time. Jude ver. 17, 18.* And were there not such, it would militate more against bible history and truth, than all that Mr Paine has said or can say against the scriptures. Lastly, let us cultivate an acquaintance with this book, and its divine Author; and order our conduct and conversation according to its precious rules, and patiently wait the issue; for as by the bible succeeding generations have been warned, taught, and encouraged, so by it, at last, will the fate of all men be fully and finally determined.

FINIS.

